













"JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

DICKINSON COLLEGE  
*Founded 1773*





# "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"



THE BOYD LEE SPAHR LECTURES  
IN AMERICANA

\* \*

1951-1956

DICKINSON COLLEGE  
*Carlisle, Pennsylvania*

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and affection*





## CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION	9
<i>Bruce Catton</i>	
FOREWORD	13
<i>William W. Edel</i>	
"JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE" OVER SUSQUEHANNA	17
<i>William W. Edel</i>	
THE OTHER MAN ON BINGHAM'S PORCH	33
<i>Whitfield J. Bell, Jr.</i>	
JOHN DICKINSON AND THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION	60
<i>James Miller Tunnell, Jr.</i>	
JOHN DICKINSON AND THE QUAKERS	67
<i>Frederick B. Tolles</i>	
JAMES WILSON AND THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION	89
<i>Charles Page Smith</i>	
AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE MIGRATIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA	107
<i>Brooke Hindle</i>	

CONTENTS

SENATOR HENRY MOORE RIDGELY, OF DELAWARE, DICKINSON 1797 <i>John A. Munroe</i>	132
JAMES BUCHANAN AT DICKINSON <i>Philip Shriver Klein</i>	157
TRUCULENT THOMAS COOPER: FOE OF TYRANNY, FRIEND OF FREEDOM <i>Harold A. Larrabee</i>	180
SPENCER F. BAIRD: WORLD-FAMOUS NATURALIST <i>Elmer Charles Herber</i>	212
MONCURE CONWAY: EARTHWARD PILGRIM <i>Mary Elizabeth Burtis</i>	233



## INTRODUCTION



The papers which are presented in this book do a great deal more than simply tell how Dickinson College came into being and how various distinguished men either ornamented its faculty or received their training in its halls. They do that, to be sure, and they offer a fascinating record, but their real value goes deeper. For here is a slice of what might have been purely local history, rendered in such a way that it becomes at the same time a valuable and moving chapter of national history as well. The Dickinson story is solidly integrated with the story of early America. It sheds light in both directions.

How did the little grammar school set up in a frontier outpost before the Revolution develop into a great college, a permanent addition to America's system of higher education? It happened, obviously, because the little institution touched the lives of certain great Americans—most notably, in the beginning, Benjamin Rush and John Dickinson. And how did it happen that these men were moved to do what they did, one of them giving the college its life and the other its name? It was not an accident, nor was it the result of impulse; it came about because the forces which made these early Americans great—the forces which, operating through them, helped to shape the form and growth of the young republic—were also the forces that would plant a college on the remote frontier, keep it alive in spite of formidable obstacles, and develop it as a vital, useful adjunct to the new democracy.

## INTRODUCTION

Dickinson, in other words, was a creation of its time, a logical extension of the activities of the men whom we rank now, when we look back on them, among the country's founding fathers. Its story is neither narrow nor localized. Its history is only in part the history of a college. It is also the story of Rush himself—a brilliant and, one gathers, at times a rather cantankerous man, a profound conservative called upon to play a leading part in an intensely radical movement, a solid scientist who could also be a devoted dreamer. It is the story of Dickinson, who paved the way for the Declaration of Independence, distrusted the adoption of independence when it was finally voted, and then served as a soldier to help make the adoption valid. And in learning how it happened that these two men (among others) worked to create Dickinson, one learns a good deal about the men themselves and about the early American scene of which they were a part. To understand the college's beginnings is to get a better understanding of the composition, the texture and the dynamics of the growing nation.

Similarly, there is that noble architectural gem which remains today as the most appealing and significant building on the campus. How did it happen that Benjamin Latrobe, then America's greatest architect, should design a building for a struggling and somewhat impecunious little college? Once designed, how did the building become an actuality? Here, again, the story reaches out far beyond the frontier, the outpost town on the great western road, and touches the lives of such men as Jefferson and Madison.

All of this, to be sure, is familiar enough to the friends of Dickinson. But it is all too easy, in describing the early history of an institution like this one, to give the effect of looking through the wrong end of a pair of field glasses; which is to say that by too



## INTRODUCTION

great an absorption with local details it is possible to remove the real significance from the picture. The subject becomes isolated, and when that happens it loses interest for all but the antiquarian.

The small college is one of the great assets of America. It exists all across the country, testifying to a great desire and a great dream which have at all times been basic possessions of the American people, and its ultimate effect on American life and character has been profound and far-reaching.

The papers in this book tell how one of the noblest of these small colleges came into existence, won an enduring place for itself, and made its own unending contribution. They make a rich and instructive story which offers a better understanding not merely of the college but of the nation which brought the college into being. It has been a privilege for this adopted son of Dickinson to have had a pleasant, if extremely minor part, in the presentation of this book.

—BRUCE CATTON





## FOREWORD



*The Boyd Lee Spahr Lectures in Americana have for the past nine years been a distinctive and scholarly part of the Dickinson College Library. Originating in 1947, at the suggestion of Professor May Morris, the Librarian of the College, they have broadened and deepened our conception of the relationship between the early history of the College and the developing America of which it was a part.*

*This series of lectures is only one segment of the outstanding contribution Miss Morris has made to the Dickinson College Library and to the College and community in her twenty-nine years of service. She has brought the Library into the center of the College life, making it a force in every area of the curriculum, building up its special collections, its research resources, and its services to the community. For this and many other reasons, the present volume of the Boyd Lee Spahr Lectures is dedicated to Professor Morris, on the occasion of her election to the position of Professor Emerita of Library Science.*

WILLIAM W. EDEL

THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.



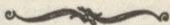


## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"





"JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"  
OVER SUSQUEHANNA



*William W. Edel*

THE PRESIDENT OF DICKINSON COLLEGE

ON March 3rd, 1773, nine prominent citizens of the frontier town of Carlisle were granted a patent by Richard and John Penn, proprietors of Pennsylvania, conveying to them a tract of land near the public square and granting the right to establish and conduct a school for instruction in the classic languages.<sup>1</sup> Since the tax lists of Carlisle for 1774 list one Henry McKinley as the only "schoolmaster" in town, and the Pennsylvania Archives record that he taught a classical school in Carlisle, we will probably be correct in setting his name down as the first principal of the Grammar School which later became Dickinson College.

Carlisle itself was a trading post and militia headquarters of some two hundred houses clustered around the public square and the nearby military post. Memories of the Indian wars were still vivid, for the expeditions to Bedford and Fort Pitt had staged here, and less than ten years ago the rescued captives of the Indians had been brought to Carlisle to be claimed by their sorrowing families, in what was perhaps the most dramatic single incident of Colonial history. York and Lancaster were more settled

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<sup>1</sup> The original patent is in the possession of Dickinson College, and from time to time is displayed in the Boyd Lee Spahr Dickinsoniana Room in Bosler Hall.

towns, but Carlisle, in its strategic location on the Great Road west, was the command post and nerve center of the growing westward thrust of the frontier. There were a few stately stone or brick houses, some still standing, which housed the local gentry, and there were log cabins and lesser habitations where the Scotch-Irish settlers and the purveyors to the wagon-trains made themselves at home. The Grammar School was erected less than a hundred paces from the Great Road with its steady stream of Conestoga wagons, families horseback or afoot, red-coated regulars and homespun militiamen, which formed the moving panoply of a nation beginning to flow westward to its new destiny.

Here Henry McKinley taught his unruly pupils until the War of the Revolution whisked him away to be a captain in the Continental Line. In his place there came a man who left the impression of his teaching on a procession of students—three quarters of a century long. The new principal was James Ross, of whom it was later said, "He taught nothing but Latin and Greek, but taught them better, perhaps, than they have ever been taught on this continent."<sup>2</sup> He was a teacher all his life, tutor at the College of Philadelphia, principal of the Grammar School in Carlisle, professor of classic languages and first member of the faculty of Dickinson College, rector of an Academy in Chambersburg, and professor of Latin and Greek at Franklin College in Lancaster. He was the author of a Greek Grammar in Latin and of a Latin Grammar that lived on for years after his death, a new edition appearing as late as 1844.

The dislocations of wartime had their effect on Carlisle no less than on seacoast cities. Hessian prisoners were quartered at the military post, just out of town. Rifle companies and buckskin scouts, sutlers and teamsters, gunsmiths and wheelwrights, filled

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<sup>2</sup> James Henry Morgan, *Dickinson College* (Carlisle, 1933), 101.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE" OVER SUSQUEHANNA

the streets. The elegant Major André, prisoner on parole, charmed the ladies with his London manners. Trustees of the Grammar School went off to war, fought in the line, served on Committees of Public Safety or in the Congress at Philadelphia. Two of them returned as generals, two as colonels. And during this time the Grammar School continued and, amazingly, prospered. At the end of the war a movement grew to have it adopted by the Presbytery of Donegal and raised in status to an Academy. The Presbytery approved the enabling resolution; but before it could be brought to reality a new and dynamic figure entered the picture, and by the power of his energy and vision transformed the school of classical languages into a college. The real father of Dickinson College was Benjamin Rush.

Born on Christmas Eve 1745, at Byberry, a few miles north of Philadelphia, Benjamin Rush was destined to become a leader in many fields. He was called the foremost physician of his day; he held the first professorship in chemistry in America; he was a talented teacher, a vigorous political pamphleteer, a far-seeing social reformer, a generous philanthropist, and a creative educational pioneer. His patriotism was so devoted that he served as fleet surgeon of the Pennsylvania gunboats in 1775 and 1776 and as surgeon general of the Middle Department of the Continental Army in 1777 and 1778, in addition to representing Pennsylvania in the Congress and being a Signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was an almost superhuman hero of the great Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic of 1793, and his account of the epidemic won him such recognition in Europe that the King of Prussia and the Queen of Etruria bestowed medals upon him, and the Czar of Russia presented him with a diamond ring. When this man died, Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams, "A better man than Rush could not have left us, more

benevolent, more learned, of finer genius, or more honest." Benjamin Rush, brilliant, volatile, intense, could always be found at the center of a flaming controversy, and it was such a controversy that directed his interests toward higher education in the Cumberland Valley.

An ardent advocate of independence, Rush had welcomed the opportunity to sit in the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention in the summer of 1776, and he had helped in drawing up the Constitution which replaced the British rule. His deeper instincts, however, were conservative and he soon was shocked at the "leather-apron" democracy to which the new Constitution had given birth. He plunged into a newspaper and pamphlet disputation over what he considered mob rule, and organized his conservative friends in a vigorous effort to revise the Constitution. This political imbroglio was cross-complicated by a bitter personal involvement. The College of Philadelphia, in which Rush held his post as a professor of chemistry, was reorganized as a state university by the new legislature in such a way as to transfer its control out of the hands of the wealthy Episcopalians and Quakers who were Rush's friends, and into the hands of the opposition party, the radicals of the day. Rush was discharged from his professorship at the reorganization, and when the new trustees offered to reinstate him, contingent upon an oath of loyalty to the new Constitution, he refused forthwith to accept reappointment, and would have nothing to do with what he called "this most nefarious business." Thereafter he gave his tremendous energy and his brilliant talents to the effort to establish a college on the western frontier, out of the reach of his enemies with their "narrow schemes." The Grammar School at Carlisle seemed providentially made for the purpose.

He pushed aside the very practical difficulties which lay in the



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE" OVER SUSQUEHANNA

way: distance, the lack of influential supporters, inadequate funds, scarcity of possible students, lack of genuine need for a college in what was virtually an outpost in the wilderness. With a faith beyond all reason he began to search for supporters. On the porch of the beautiful home of William Bingham, in 1782, he talked at length with Colonel John Montgomery, a prominent resident of Carlisle and one of the trustees of the Grammar School. Montgomery, patriot and soldier, had commanded a regiment of Cumberland County riflemen in 1776 and had served as burgess and judge of the local courts before that. Now he represented Pennsylvania in the Continental Congress and was universally respected for forcefulness, courage, and good judgment. On Bingham's porch Rush found in Montgomery a kindred soul, and together they laid their plans for a college at Carlisle. In later years Rush was to use again and again the phrase "Bingham's Porch" to call to memory the decision made there and its hoped-for consequences. One of their first approaches was to their host, reputed the wealthiest citizen of Philadelphia. He agreed to lend his support, and later gave a substantial gift to the funds of the new college. Robert Morris, too, subscribed literally, but financial disaster overtook him before the subscription was paid. The most prominent and most important adherent of their cause, however, was the distinguished patriot and statesman from whom the college was to take its name.

John Dickinson had published his *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* in 1767, therein stating the political basis for the Declaration he was fated never to sign. These, the most cogently reasoned essays yet published on the problems of the Colonies and the Mother Country, set their author almost at once in a position of great authority among the leaders of colonial thought. Translated into French the Letters were the talk of the Paris

salons, with the result that in 1769 Rush, then a twenty-three-year-old graduate in medicine of the University of Edinburgh, who had been introduced in Paris as "a friend of Mons. Franklin," was called upon by Diderot and the Marquis de Mirabeau to explain the political ideals of his fellow countryman.<sup>3</sup> Rush never forgot this experience, and it no doubt enriched his warm friendship and admiration for "the Penman of the Revolution." Dickinson's popularity had suffered when the New Englanders in the Continental Congress could not bend him to their will, and they had called his Quaker conservatism, timidity. His refusal to support the Declaration, as premature, was held against him, although he was one of the few members of the Congress to serve in the field, first in the ranks and then at the head of his regiment.

But the war was at its end, and John Dickinson had now been elected President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. In this position his influence with the General Assembly was decisive in many ways, and with his help Rush began to persuade the legislators that a charter should be granted for a college in the west. A pamphlet from Rush's pen entitled, "Hints for Establishing a College at Carlisle in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania" outlined the plan and claimed many advantages for it. Opposition was strong, however, the friends of the University of Pennsylvania and of Princeton rallying to the defense of their own institutions against the unneeded upstart. In Carlisle too there was opposition, led by General Armstrong, the leading citizen. Rush fought for his dream with tongue and pen and with an astute political wiliness that was not far from guile. He disarmed the opposition of General Armstrong by placing him on the Board of Trustees of the proposed college. He won the sup-

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<sup>3</sup> *Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, G. W. Corner, ed., (Princeton, 1948), 67-68.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE" OVER SUSQUEHANNA

port of James Wilson, also a Signer of the Declaration and perhaps the ablest legal mind in Philadelphia, by asking him to assist John Dickinson in drawing up the charter. He won denominational support by including among the trustees the clergymen of thirteen different churches. When on September 9th, 1783, the issue came to a vote in the General Assembly, in the final tally of strength the Act to establish the college was approved by a comfortable margin.

On October 15th, 1782, Rush had written to John Montgomery, "Mr. Dickinson will become a liberal contributor for us. I intended to have proposed to you to call the college after him and his worthy lady, JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE."<sup>4</sup> The gifts materialized. John Dickinson was one of the wealthiest landholders in the united colonies, with six square miles of wheatland in Delaware and thousands of acres in Maryland and Pennsylvania. He gave the infant college two hundred acres in York County and five hundred in Cumberland, solid rolling Pennsylvania real estate. But Mary Dickinson gave a gift more valuable by far, the library she had inherited from her grandfather and her father, Isaac Norris, the older and the younger, more than fifteen hundred volumes. These books, in the fields of law, religion, science, history, philosophy, language, and literature, had formed the library of two of the most cultivated gentlemen of colonial times, and this library became the nucleus of the college collection. It was a noble gift.<sup>5</sup> But in spite of Mary Dickinson's service in setting the standard of scholarship of the young college—the books she gave were in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German, and Italian—the name Rush had proposed either was too like

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<sup>4</sup> *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, L. H. Butterfield, ed., (Princeton, 1951), I, 290.

<sup>5</sup> The Mary Dickinson Library, almost intact, is one of the treasures of Dickinson College and is displayed in the Boyd Lee Spahr Dickinsoniana Room in Bosler Hall.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

WILLIAM AND MARY in tidewater Virginia, or else brought memories too reminiscent of hated royal ties, and as a result her husband alone was finally honored in the title. The charter provided that "in memory of the great and important services rendered to his country by his Excellency, John Dickinson, esquire, president of the Supreme Executive Council, and in commemoration of his very liberal donation to the institution, the said college shall be forever hereafter called and known by the name of DICKINSON COLLEGE."

With the passage of the establishing Act by "The Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met," the organization of the college moved on apace. The first meeting of the Board of Trustees was held at the home of John Dickinson, the second at the residence of Benjamin Rush, and the third at the State House, all in Philadelphia and all within the week. John Dickinson was elected president of the Board and other organizational matters accomplished, including the preparation of forms for subscriptions. But in April 1784, the Trustees met in Carlisle for the first time and set up the actual operating mechanism of the college. As seven of the nine trustees of the Grammar School were also trustees of the new college, there was no difficulty in taking over the site, building and assets of the Grammar School, and James Ross, its principal, was at once elected the first member of the faculty of Dickinson College as Professor of Languages. A seal was ordered made, to the design suggested by Rush: an open Bible, a telescope, and a liberty cap, with the motto: "Pietate et doctrina tuta libertas," the design unchanged to this day. It was ordered that all lands contributed be sold as soon as possible and the proceeds invested. John Dickinson's gift turned from acres into pounds, as did the acres that William Bingham had contributed. A resolution was



passed to attempt to secure more adequate quarters than the Grammar School building, by purchase of the "public works," the military post adjacent to Carlisle. Then came the action that made all of Benjamin Rush's dreams worthwhile, for the Board of Trustees next unanimously elected Dr. Charles Nisbet of Montrose, Scotland, as Principal of Dickinson College. The election was not spontaneous. Rush had carefully planned it, and had adroitly swung the Trustees to support the candidate he had chosen.

A few years ago the great-great granddaughter of Charles Nisbet gave the college his original parchment licensing him to preach, granted in 1760 by the Presbytery of Glasgow. Shortly after his ordination he was called to the parish of Montrose, on the east coast of Scotland, halfway between Dundee and Aberdeen. Here he became known for the universality of his learning, and as early as 1766 his name was mentioned for the then vacant presidency of Princeton. Rush was at that time in Edinburgh and it is known that he discussed the presidency of Princeton with John Witherspoon, who had suggested Nisbet for the office. It is quite probable that Rush met Nisbet through Witherspoon, and learned to appreciate the quality of his scholarship. At any rate, in 1784, through the vigorous personal persuasion of Benjamin Rush, Charles Nisbet accepted the presidency of Dickinson College.

The genius of Rush shows nowhere with a clearer light than in the wisdom of this selection. Nisbet had high hopes; they were impossible of realization. In his disillusion he became a caustic critic of the people among whom he lived, of the college and its trustees, of Carlisle, and of all things American. In a few months he became estranged from Rush. He resigned, reconsidered, withdrew his resignation, complained, quarrelled, struck out savagely

with his bitter wit, headed his letters "from the tomb of Dickinson College," berated the trustees as "the meanest of men," and was thoroughly and completely unhappy. But this was only the rough and prickly outer husk of this dour Scotsman. He lived, served, and labored for twenty years in great personal loneliness and discomfort, but he built in a frontier town an institution of learning with an incredibly intense and effective intellectual life of its own. Charles Nisbet was one of the greatest teachers ever to set foot upon the shores of the young Republic!

When Nisbet died, Dr. Rush wrote of him in his journal, "He was, in knowledge, a walking Library." Encyclopedic in learning, he was a master of eight languages and equally at home in philosophy, logic, theology, ethics, economics, politics, and belles lettres. Satisfied with no textbooks by other authors, he wrote his own. His advanced course on theology runs to eight volumes, hand-written in his copper-plate script, bound in calfskin. He gave what may have been the earliest course in classical economics of the Adam Smith school ever given in this hemisphere. Although he fought with Trustees and townsfolk, he revealed to his students another and more welcome side of his character. One of them wrote, "Probably no man on this side of the Atlantic ever brought into the social circle such diversified and ample stores of erudition; such an extraordinary knowledge of men and books and opinions; such an amazing fund of rare and racy anecdotes; and all poured out with so much unstudied simplicity, with such constant flashes of wit and humour, and with such a peculiar mixture of satire and good nature, as kept every company, whether young or old, hanging upon his lips."<sup>6</sup> Of his students it was said, "Their regard was not the cold respect of a scholar to his master, it rose to veneration. He considered them all as his chil-

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel Miller, *Memoir of the Rev. Charles Nisbet* (N.Y., 1840), 211-212.



dren, they loved him as a father."<sup>7</sup> Of his courage and integrity in controversy it was written, "His tongue . . . uttered what his honest heart conceived."<sup>8</sup>

But a great teacher is known by his pupils, Nisbet taught only two hundred and eighty students in his whole twenty years as president of the college, yet among the number there were sixty-seven who became clergymen, thirty physicians and twenty-seven lawyers. There were men who later served in the following capacities: U.S. Senators from Illinois, Tennessee, Delaware, and Pennsylvania; members of Congress from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Tennessee, and Delaware; Governors of Virginia and Illinois; a Minister to Russia; the chief framer of the Constitution of Ohio; the Commissary General of the Army; the Commissioner of Public Buildings to the National Government; the President of the Susquehanna Railroad; the pioneer in vaccination against smallpox; two presidents of Washington College and presidents of Ohio University, St. John's College, and Jefferson College, and the founder of Metzger College; nine principals of academies; two U.S. District Judges; the Chief Justice of Kentucky; the Chief Justice and two Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania; Secretaries of the Treasury and of War and Attorney General of the United States; and the Chief Justice of the United States.<sup>9</sup> That Chief Justice of the United States, Roger B. Taney, was later to administer the oath of office to the only Pennsylvanian ever to reach the White House, James Buchanan, who entered Dickinson College the year after Nisbet's death and graduated in 1809. If the achievement of his students is the measure of a teacher, the record stands an accolade for Charles Nisbet.

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<sup>7</sup> Obituary quoted in Morgan, *op. cit.*, 159.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>9</sup> George L. Reed, *Alumni Record, Dickinson College*, Carlisle, 1905.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Upon his arrival in Carlisle the Scotch dominie found his college housed in a tiny brick building thirty feet by twenty-three, with one schoolroom ready for teaching. A year later the building had been enlarged by the addition of a stone section which doubled its size. The inadequacy of this house was immediately apparent, and efforts were made to improve the facilities, without result. Fourteen years had passed when on July 25, 1799, the college was finally able to purchase from the Penns the present John Dickinson Campus, seven acres in size, at a cost of \$150.50. Even before the transaction had been completed, work was begun on the preparation of the site for building a "large, elegant and commodious" structure which would be the new home of the college. On June 20, 1799, John Montgomery laid the corner-stone; the building progressed slowly, for funds were hard to come by, but by January 1803 the structure was in use. It had been a long struggle, dogged at every step by poverty, but eighteen years of labor on Nisbet's part was at last rewarded.

The reward lasted a month. On February 3, 1803, John Montgomery wrote a tragic headlong letter to Benjamin Rush:

We had got three rooms finished in the new Building and were occopayed by the student about 4 or 5 weeks very comfortably the Building was neerly finished had a grand appearence was ornamentale and elegant had twelve large apartments but as all things were uncertain in this world and that our joys and Comforts and not be compleat or parment that noble fine house was yesterday redusced to ashes . . . thus my friend after all our trouble and expence in erecting an elegant and comfortable house for Dickinson College our hopes were blasted in a few minutes my eies beheld the distroying flames with an achening that I need not tell you how feel on this meloncoley occasing you will know them by your owen feelings this has happened at an unfortunate time.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Library Company of Philadelphia, Rush Mss.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE" OVER SUSQUEHANNA

This was a crushing disaster, but it was also an open door. Before the ashes were cold, plans for rebuilding were made, and this time the building committee, through Judge Hugh Henry Brackenridge of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, secured the services of Benjamin H. Latrobe, the foremost architect of his time. Brackenridge rode horseback, "with the speed of an express," from Easton to Philadelphia to catch Latrobe before his departure for Washington to serve as architect of the National Capitol, and persuaded him to design the "new edifice of Dickinson College" which should rise on the ashes of the old. The great architect not only drew the plans for a supremely lovely building but presented the plans to the college as a free gift. With help from many sources—Jefferson, Madison, Aaron Burr, Gallatin, John Marshall, John Eager Howard, Stephen Girard, and a host of others—the work of construction went slowly on. While the building, which we now know as Old West, existed as yet only on paper it was described by the editor of the *Carlisle Gazette* in these words: "Simplicity and adaptation to the purposes of the Institution are its excellence." It would come to its ultimate loveliness only when translated into the warm limestone of the Cumberland Valley and mellowed by the storms and suns of a century and a half. Thus it stands today the crowning glory of the campus. Talbot Hamlin, foremost architectural historian, says that Old West is "one of the most distinguished, and certainly the most subtly designed of all early American college structures, for its distinction is founded not on ornament but on solid qualities of functional planning, good proportion, and excellent materials, beautifully used."<sup>11</sup>

Nisbet saw the walls of Old West rise, but death came to him

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<sup>11</sup> Talbot Hamlin, *Benjamin H. Latrobe*, (N.Y., 1955), 194.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

in 1804 before the building was completed. The college again lost heavily in 1808, when the devoted John Montgomery and the distinguished John Dickinson both died. In five more years Benjamin Rush followed them, and the great early leaders of the college were no more.

New presidents succeeded each other at brief intervals, Davidson, Atwater, McKnight, Mason, Neill, and How. Difficulties and discouragements mounted. Problems became critical: the college closed its doors, reopened them, struggled on with dissension and misunderstanding between faculty and trustees, hovered on the edge of bankruptcy, had student riots and insubordination, could find no clear course to steer through dangers and turmoils, lost students until only a handful remained, and finally in 1832 closed with no real hope of ever reopening.

This twenty-odd years of internal stress and tumult was redeemed by a single episode which we now recognize as one of the most brilliant scenes in the long history of the college. When Dr. Joseph Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen, came to America in 1794 to escape persecution in England, he was accompanied by his friend Thomas Cooper, whose stormy career in England and France had led him to seek the shelter of more friendly shores. Educated at Oxford, Cooper was learned in the law and in the natural sciences, but his disputatious manner and unorthodox views led to constant conflicts until he was convicted under the Alien and Sedition Laws, fined and imprisoned. Released, he served in important government posts and was appointed to the Pennsylvania bench, but was ousted after a few years. In 1811, by an adroit move on the part of two trustees, he was elected Professor of Chemistry of the college. Despite an almost continuous acrimonious involvement with all his fellow faculty members, Cooper did three things for the college. He brought to the faculty



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE" OVER SUSQUEHANNA

perhaps its most brilliant and provocative mind. Thomas Jefferson, writing to E. I. duPont de Nemours, said of Cooper: "The greatest man in America, in the powers of his mind, and in acquired information; and that without a single exception."<sup>12</sup> The second thing followed from Jefferson's letter, for duPont sent his oldest son, Alfred Victor duPont, to Dickinson to learn chemistry under Cooper. The final service Cooper rendered was perhaps the most important, for through him the college was able to purchase the laboratory apparatus belonging to Joseph Priestley. This collection contains the great double burning-glass, the same glass, or Priestley's own duplicate, with which the father of modern chemistry discovered oxygen. The college owns nothing so precious as this famed collection of historical scientific apparatus. Its acquisition was a brilliant stroke of fortune for which Thomas Cooper bears the credit.

When the college closed in 1832, its funds were exhausted, its faculty dispersed, and its only resources were its stately limestone building and the library and scientific apparatus. There seemed no hope of continuance. But a new dawn was already edging over the horizon. From an entirely unexpected quarter came new life, new resources, new energy, a new faculty, and most of all, a new president—one who would measure up to the stature of Charles Nisbet, and carry the college to new and greater heights. In the Methodist church a realization of the need of educational institutions was making itself felt, and the Methodists of Pennsylvania and Maryland, looking about for a site upon which to build a college, found Dickinson College waiting for them. Acting through the Baltimore Conference and the Philadelphia Conference, the Methodists arranged to meet the debts

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<sup>12</sup> Dumas Malone, *Public Life of Thomas Cooper* (New Haven, 1926), 237.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

of the college and to take over the property. Thus without an interruption in the legal continuity of the charter the old trustees were replaced by trustees nominated by the two Methodist Conferences, and in 1833 the college began its new life, which has continued to this day. The life blood of new endowments poured in from the Methodist churches, a brilliant faculty was assembled, and the Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, John Price Durbin, aged thirty-three, was elected president.

President Durbin was born in a Kentucky log farmhouse and, without schooling, spent his growing years in apprenticeship to a cabinet-maker. As a journeyman cabinet-maker he was converted to Methodism, and by incredible application and exertion he was ready for college by his twentieth year. In 1824 he was graduated from Cincinnati College. He was immediately called to Augusta College as Professor of Languages. In quick succession he was elected Professor of Natural Sciences at Wesleyan College at Middletown, Connecticut, then editor of the *Christian Advocate*, then Chaplain of the Senate. It was this brilliant, many-sided young man who came to the presidency of Dickinson as new and more promising days dawned. He would have eleven effective and productive years to serve, and, building on foundations laid by Rush and Nisbet, he would frame the structure of the Dickinson of today.

In the capable hands of this cabinet-maker, scholarly, wise, and far-seeing, who knew how to construct a building fitly framed together, we must leave the bright destiny of the college for the moment, for with his inauguration we come to the end of our story of the early days of JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE over Susquehanna.



## THE OTHER MAN ON BINGHAM'S PORCH



By *Whitfield J. Bell, Jr.*

DICKINSON College was in a low state in the summer of 1802. Faculty salaries were unpaid; student enrollment was falling. The high-Federalist opinions of its principal Charles Nisbet alternately provoked public contempt, scorn, and anger. After three years a "college house" remained unfinished, and the Trustees had no funds to complete it. In short, one trustee confessed, Dickinson was "in a hazardous condition; &, without a revolution, must hasten its total ruin."<sup>1</sup> To even a sanguine observer it must indeed have appeared that twenty years of planning and prayer were ending ingloriously in failure. Only one man seemed to discern what lay beyond these towering difficulties, if indeed he saw the difficulties at all. With invincible optimism, "Let us finish our building," cried the institution's founder Benjamin Rush, "and keep up the *forms* of the College. *All will end well.* Bingham's porch may wear away, but the ideas conceived on it by two of the trustees will have full accomplish-

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\* Dr. Bell, formerly Boyd Lee Spahr Professor of American History at Dickinson College, is now Assistant Editor, The Papers of Benjamin Franklin. The lecture was delivered on February 5, 1954.

<sup>1</sup> John King to Ashbel Green, November 16, 1801, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP).

ment, & Dickinson College will one day be the source of light and knowledge to the western parts of the United States."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Rush's correspondent understood the allusion. Rush had used it before to reanimate his friend and fellow-laborer by the memory of that afternoon at the home of Philadelphia's wealthy William Bingham twenty years before when he and John Montgomery laid their plans for a college at Carlisle. Rush moved in circles of the great; he recorded tirelessly all he saw and felt, and preserved the records; his reputation is a national one. On the other hand, almost nothing is known of the other man on Bingham's porch that afternoon. Yet if the college owes its conception to Benjamin Rush, it probably owes its survival before 1816 to John Montgomery. His steadiness supported and his good sense refined Rush's eruptions of benevolence. He was the stable complement to the dynamic founder. Throughout Dickinson's first quarter century, a period that was never free from anxieties for the friends of the college, Montgomery was always there.<sup>3</sup>

John Montgomery was born in the north of Ireland in 1727, if his own calculation was correct. He was thus Scotch-Irish, one of that self-congratulating nation in America—"proud," "brawl-

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Rush to John Montgomery, July 3, 1802, Rush Mss., Ridgway Library, Philadelphia (microfilm in Dickinson College Library). Except as otherwise indicated, all manuscripts cited are in the Rush Mss., on microfilm at Dickinson College. See also, Rush to Montgomery, July 31, 1784; L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Letters of Benjamin Rush* (2v., Princeton, 1951) I, 320.

Except for two of Montgomery's letters, spelling and capitalization have been modernized. In Montgomery's case this is unavoidable, for that worthy man was pretty ignorant of the rules of grammar, and wholly so of those of spelling. Montgomery's spelling varies from letter to letter and sometimes even from line to line. Some of his more interesting misspellings are: "scoitiy" for society, "malliace" for malice, "solcinate" for solicit, "hummer" for humor, "acknologue" for acknowledge, "michefe" for mischief, "coleuges" for colleagues, "metroplais" for metropolis, "essu" for issue, "embroa" for embryo, "methoditizem" for methodism, "commodouse" for commodious, and "monnongialae" for Monongahela.

<sup>3</sup> Rush saluted Montgomery in 1786 as "a passionately honest man," who was "the father and pillar of our college in Cumberland County." Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, I, 379.



ing," "self-reliant," and "loyal"—of whom it was said that they revered two Johns—Calvin and Barleycorn; and that they kept the Ten Commandments and everything else they could lay their hands on. With a modest portion of his countrymen's attributes, including an ironic humor and a capacity for anger, but very little else (for his education was narrow and defective), when still in his teens, Montgomery came to America. He is said to have engaged in mercantile pursuits for several years—which means he probably clerked in stores until he saved enough capital to trade on his own. A young man without means or connections could best realize his ambitions in the western countries. Accordingly Montgomery came to Carlisle, probably among its first Scots-Irish settlers; opened a store; found employment as a surveyor; bought land; prospered with the rising town. He was soon influential and respectable. When the Indians took the warpath in 1754, Montgomery joined his neighbors in begging the governor to protect the western country against "a powerful army of cruel, merciless and unhuman enemies"; he signed a similar petition in 1756; and two years later he led a company under General Forbes against the Indians and the French at Fort Duquesne. He was elected sheriff of Cumberland County in 1757, was an elder of the Presbyterian Church, and, in 1773, a trustee of a local grammar school. He was, in short, established in town and country as a man of weight and force.<sup>4</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that Montgomery was chairman of the public meeting at Carlisle on July 12, 1774, which, like

<sup>4</sup> *Centennial Memorial of the Presbytery of Carlisle* (2v., Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1889) II, 316–317, gives Montgomery's birth date as 1722; but in a letter to John Dickinson, November 20, 1805 (Maria Dickinson Logan Papers, HSP), Montgomery writes that in another month he would reach his seventy-eighth year. Conarro Papers, X, 60, HSP; Provincial Papers, XIX, 88; XXIV, 30, State Records Office, Harrisburg. Patents from Thomas and Richard Penn to Montgomery for lots 76, 84, 100 in Carlisle, May 14, 1760, are in Cadwallader Collection, Deeds, HSP.



many similar meetings at the same period, vigorously condemned the Boston Port Bill and supported the call for a Continental Congress.<sup>5</sup> But John Montgomery was no radical. He aimed to eliminate the Proprietary in Pennsylvania and the British administration in America. Subversion of the American ruling class was no part of his program, and his unvarying attitudes toward leveling democrats were contempt and anger. He was a conservative in an age when conservatism was constructive; and his political principles, his public services, and his long support of Dickinson College were each informed with the true conservative's deep concern for the future.

From the outbreak of resistance Montgomery was a key figure in Cumberland County. "I must beg of you," James Wilson wrote him from Congress in May, 1775, "to promote . . . the military spirit that so laudably prevails in Cumberland County. Every thing depends on it."<sup>6</sup> He was a member of the committee of Safety. He approved and supported the Assembly's bill to give the West more equal representation as a measure he had "much at heart." He counseled on the raising of troops, fretted when their supplies were not forthcoming, and marched at the head of the militia when Pennsylvania was threatened. He used his influence to get commissions for his friends' sons, and hoped his own Sammy might have a lieutenancy, despite his youth. "I must confess," he told James Wilson, "it gives me real pleasure to find him offering himself in so noble a cause and had I ten sons fit, they should cheerfully have my consent."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Conway P. Wing, *History of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania*, (Philadelphia, 1879), 76, 79.

<sup>6</sup> E. C. Burnett, ed., *Letters of the Members of the Continental Congress* (8v., Washington, 1921-1936) I, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery to James Wilson, December 19, 1775, Gratz Collection, HSP; William Thompson to Montgomery, June 30, 1775, Read Mss., 17, HSP; Montgomery to —, July 27, 1775, Revolutionary Papers, I, 15, State Records Office, Harrisburg.



Because he knew the West and the Indians, Congress sent Montgomery on a peace mission to the tribes at Pittsburgh in the summer of 1776. When some of the chiefs paid a visit to Congress in the fall, Montgomery arranged for a military escort which, he thought, by gratifying the Indians' deep sense of protocol, might "be of great service to the public interest." Peace with the Indians was only partial and short-lived, however. War parties were out in 1780, scalping, taking captives, even threatening to drive the settlers back to Shearman's Valley. Montgomery led the County in an appeal for protection. "Those blood hounds," he exclaimed angrily at the forays, "are gone with their prisoners and booty, without any loss or being pursued, which no doubt will encourage them to return to our frontier in greater numbers . . . about harvest."<sup>8</sup>

In 1781 Montgomery was elected to the State Assembly, but the victory of the conservatives in Cumberland County was brief, and he was defeated for re-election. The State government, however, was in the hands of his friends. In November, 1782, he was made a member of the Pennsylvania delegation in Congress. "I am much pleased with the present Congress," he wrote Robert Magaw soon after he reached Philadelphia; "there is men in it of the first abilities. . . ."<sup>9</sup> In June, however, the situation of Congress altered. Four hundred unpaid soldiers mutinied and threatened Congress; the state government took no step to protect the national body and suppress the army's insurrection; and Congress, understandably to all except Philadelphians, moved to Princeton where, ignoring expressions of regret and invitations

<sup>8</sup> Burnett, *Letters*, II, 18; Montgomery and Jasper Yeates to Robert Hanna, October 27, 1776, HSP; Montgomery to —, May 29, 1780, Revolutionary Papers, XXXVI, 16, State Records Office, Harrisburg. The petition, dated May 25, is in *ibid.*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Montgomery to Robert Magaw, February 11, 1783, Lamberton Scotch-Irish Collection, II, 41, HSP; Burnett, *Letters*, VI, 1; VII, lxxiii, for the record of Montgomery's attendance.



to return, they remained six months until, in November, they moved to Annapolis.

To an active and conscientious man service in Congress after the removal from Philadelphia was dull and frustrating. Almost never were all the states represented; Montgomery's own colleagues in the Pennsylvania delegation, he complained, came and went as they chose. Little business of any importance was transacted. The quality of members dropped, and those who stayed at their posts were abused. A political journalist, for example, was puzzled "to discover one single virtue of quality which could recommend John Montgomery of Carlisle to a seat in Congress. . . ." Service in Congress under such conditions was only scarcely compensated by the "good fat turkey, the fine fish and delightful oysters, the pleasing prospect and the cooling breezes" Montgomery feelingly listed among the charms of Annapolis.<sup>10</sup>

About six months before John Montgomery was elected to Congress, while he was still in the Assembly—that is, in the spring of 1782—the Presbytery of Donegal resolved to seek a charter from the Assembly for an academy at Carlisle. Warmly supported by the clergy and laity alike, the petition was carried to Philadelphia by John Montgomery. One of those whose assistance he sought in getting votes for the bill was Dr. Benjamin Rush, physician and politician, above all an enthusiast for revolution and reform. Their relations were more than formal, for Montgomery's son William had been one of Rush's medical apprentices a few years before.<sup>11</sup> Rush at this time was smarting at

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<sup>10</sup> Burnett, *Letters*, VII, 77n, 315n, 443, 495, 586–587; VIII, 852–853; Montgomery to John Dickinson, March 15, 1784, Gratz Collection, HSP; Montgomery to Edward Hand, February 12, 1784, Revolutionary Papers, LIX, 84, State Records Office, Harrisburg.

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Smith to Montgomery, July 10, 1793, Montgomery to Edward Burd, September 9, 1795, HSP; Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 878. Another son, John, who became a lawyer, was described as "an insignificant creature, subject to intoxication." He once got into a drunken brawl in the court of Mifflin County. Thomas Smith to Thomas Mifflin, Sept. 29, 1792, Feb. 6, 1793, HSP.



the radical control of the new University of the State of Pennsylvania, and his active mind was already conceiving that vast design of republican education which in Pennsylvania would ultimately require four colleges to serve a state university. A college, governed by conservatives like Rush and Montgomery, located at Carlisle, the capital of the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, would serve Rush's immediate purpose and his ultimate vision. On Bingham's porch one day in the summer of 1782, Rush sold Montgomery his idea; and the man who had gone to Philadelphia to get an academy went back to the Presbytery with the plan of a college.

Some of his fellow Presbyterians needed no persuasion from Montgomery; to win over others Rush prepared a memorandum which Montgomery was to show interested parties. The opposition was strong, both in the Presbytery and in the state at large. Friends of republican education opposed a sectarian institution; friends of Princeton feared the influence of another Presbyterian establishment; "New Light" and "Old Light" Presbyterians were each jealous lest the other control the new college; while Dr. John Ewing and the radical supporters of the University wanted no rival in the state at all. The opposition was so formidable that Montgomery wondered whether he and Rush should not settle for an academy after all. "Don't be discouraged," came Rush's ringing summons. "All will end well. . . . Don't think of an academy instead of a college. The subscriptions are expressly for a college."<sup>12</sup> And subscriptions did come in. Robert Morris

<sup>12</sup> Rush, "Hints for establishing a College at Carlisle," Sept. 3, 1782; James Lang and others to Rush, Nov. 13, 1782; Rush to Montgomery, Nov. 26, 1782; John King to Rush, Jan. 9, 1783; Montgomery to Rush, June 30, 1783; Rush to Montgomery, April 15, 1783.

The story of the negotiations of these years has been told by James Henry Morgan in *Dickinson College: The History of One Hundred and Fifty Years, 1783-1933* (Carlisle, 1933), and by L. H. Butterfield in "Benjamin Rush and the Beginnings of John and Mary's College over Susquehanna," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, III (1948) 427-442, reprinted in *Bulwark of Liberty: Early Years at Dickinson* (New York, 1950).



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

pledged \$1,000 (which he never paid), the French minister and the French consul each contributed \$200 (in cash), others assigned land certificates until Montgomery expected they would raise £5,000 in Philadelphia alone.<sup>13</sup>

This proof of success, the judicious appeals by Rush, the labors of the clergymen John Black and John King among the Presbytery, Montgomery's own wise approaches, all had their effect. Though still not favoring Carlisle as the seat of a Presbyterian college, General Armstrong and others withdrew their opposition; assurances were given that the Board of Trustees would be representative of all the religious denominations in the state. Montgomery reported that "a number of country people" were "delighted with the prospect of having a college. . . ."<sup>14</sup> The way was cleared to apply for a charter.

At this moment Congress moved to Princeton, so that Montgomery could do nothing personally to guide the charter through the Assembly; nor could he attend the first meeting of the Board on September 15, 1783. Not one to give or accept excuses, Rush chided his friend with growing carelessness of the child he had helped bring into the world, until Montgomery had to assure Rush he still loved "the brat"; that if anything could be done, he would "lay aside every other business and attend to it. . . ." A few weeks later Rush begged Montgomery to come to Philadelphia "to push subscriptions" at Christmas time, "when good eating & drinking open the heart."<sup>15</sup> But Montgomery spent the holidays with his family at Carlisle and did little more college business than to sign the Trustees' oath on December 26. This vacation,

<sup>13</sup> Montgomery to Robert Magaw, Feb. 11, 1783, Lamberton Scotch-Irish collection, II, 41, HSP.

<sup>14</sup> Montgomery to Rush, April 16, June 30, 1783. See also Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, I, 294-297, 298-300, 309-310.

<sup>15</sup> Burnett, *Letters*, VII, 375n; Rush to Montgomery, Sept. 27, 1783; Montgomery to Rush, Sept. 30, 1783.



the implacable Rush calculated, cost the college £1,000, which only Montgomery could have raised. "Indeed, my good friend," Rush told him firmly, "I have been very angry at *you*. You impose *too* much upon me. . . . Don't desert your own offspring. . . . If *you* will put your shoulders once more to the wheel, all will go well." Montgomery promised that as soon as Congress adjourned, he would give his aid "as long as we can collect a shilling."<sup>16</sup>

But if Montgomery would not leave his family for college business, he did leave Congress. A meeting of the Board of Trustees was to be held at Carlisle on April 6. Montgomery and Armstrong had made the local arrangements—a sermon by Mr. Black, business meetings at the courthouse, an inspection of the Public Works. On the first day Montgomery had all the Trustees to dinner at his house. It was "plentiful, elegant," Rush noted with some condescension, "& as well attended as any dinner I ever was at in a gentleman's house in Philadelphia." On the last night the Trustees were in Carlisle a civic dinner was given in their honor by the local citizenry. Rush was in town four nights; he spent every evening at Montgomery's.<sup>17</sup>

From this time forward John Montgomery after Dr. Rush was the most active of all the Trustees, the principal channel of communication between Rush and the Board, and from 1795 until his death in 1808, undisputed spokesman for the Carlisle members. He rarely missed a meeting, except during his serious illness in 1800–1802; and after General Armstrong's death in 1795, he usually presided over the Board as president pro tem. After 1798 he was treasurer as well. He was on every important committee and many unimportant ones. When money had to be

<sup>16</sup> Trustees Minutes, I, 37, Dickinson College Library; Rush to Montgomery, Feb. 17, 1784; Montgomery to Rush, May 7, 1784.

<sup>17</sup> Trustees Minutes, I, 98–99; Montgomery to Rush, March 25, 1784; Rush, "Journal of a Trip to Carlisle in 1784," ed. by L. H. Butterfield, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXIV (1950), 451–453.



found, Montgomery was asked to raise it, whether that meant a journey to Baltimore or a perambulation of the farmers of East Pennsborough Township. He supervised the enlargement of the schoolhouse to accommodate the college. The year before he died he was asked to procure a lightning rod for the new college house. While the Trustees made a practice of regularly visiting classes, Montgomery was one of the visitors and their chairman. "Col. Montgomery's zeal and diligence from the beginning deserves great praise and indulgence from us all," one trustee told Rush; "he is the only spring of every active resolution in Carlisle; whatever is to be done, must be done by him, or [remain] undone."<sup>18</sup>

The first things the Trustees had to do in 1783-1784 were to engage a faculty and a principal, and to buy, rent, or build accommodations for the college. Rush was ready with a candidate for the principalship: the Reverend Mr. Charles Nisbet of Montrose in Scotland. Rush had met Nisbet fifteen years before when, as a medical student at Edinburgh, he took a lead in the negotiations to persuade John Witherspoon to accept the presidency of Princeton. Then in the summer of 1783 Nisbet renewed the acquaintance by asking Rush for information about America for prospective Scots emigrants. This was a pretty thin basis of recommendation, but a Scots president, whose qualifications could only be increased by the ocean passage, Rush believed, would give Dickinson a reputation to rival Princeton's. Though not averse from the choice of Nisbet, Montgomery ventured to suggest that an American might do as well. But when Rush advanced the name of a London clergyman whom Oxford expelled for praying extemporaneously, Montgomery absolutely

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<sup>18</sup> John King to Rush, Feb. 2, 1786. In 1784 Montgomery told Rush he believed that Dickinson College was "in a peculiar manner" favored by God, and that this thought sustained him in dark periods. "My heart rejoices when I reflect that you and I have in some measure been made the instruments of carrying it so far into effect."



refused assent. He would never agree, he declared, to the election of a principal who was "in the least tinctured with Methodism."<sup>19</sup>

Nisbet was elected principal, and, after some hesitation, came to America in June, 1785. Rush was delighted with him. So was John Dickinson, who came up to Philadelphia to call. Rush related the incident to Montgomery: "He took me on one side, & offered me his purse for the Doctor's use. I told him that I had advanced him 60 guineas; but that we should have occasion probably for his assistance some months hence. He told me that we might command him in any way. 'I will do more for the college than ever I promised,' (said he). I hinted at a philosophical apparatus. 'A philosophical apparatus!' (said he); 'I will endow a professorship. . . . I squeezed his hand . . . & told him that . . . the college & his name with it, would live to the end of time."<sup>20</sup>

The new principal and his family reached Carlisle on July fourth. Rush had already sent Montgomery detailed instructions how the great man should be received.

Doc<sup>r</sup> Nisbet was at York untill monday happy Day 4th July he set out Early and Dinned at the fine spring at Carlisle Iron works, five mils from town about 2 oClock when thire was a Dinner prepared and table under a Bothe he was met thire by near thirty Ladies and above 40 Gentlemen he was recived by the trustees and after Dinner and visiting the Furnace & forge was Conduced to Carlisle had you been present you woud have been Dilighted with the Grnad appearance it Realy surpased opinion the Doc<sup>r</sup> was highly Dilighted he lodges with me he is indeed a very agreeable man. . . .<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Montgomery to Rush, May 7, 1784; Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, I, 332.

<sup>20</sup> Rush to Montgomery, June 27, 1785.

<sup>21</sup> Montgomery to Rush, July 6, 1785.

"Did I not tell you *so*?" Rush crowed when he received Montgomery's report. "Is not every wish and hope gratified in *him*?"<sup>22</sup>

Rush's exultation was premature. Not ten days after Nisbet's arrival in Carlisle, the torrent of complaints began; they continued for nearly twenty years. The town was barbarously uncultivated, the college deficient in every respect. There were too few masters and they ill qualified; the classes needed to be graded; the schoolhouse was a hogpen. There ought to be a balcony in the town church. There were no funds for anything. His family were homesick; they all had raging fevers. Rush was disappointed, then angry; when he attended the Trustees meeting in August, he did not call on Nisbet, though the principal was confined to his house with a violent fever; and Nisbet reproached him bitterly for this neglect in a letter dated, "Tomb of Dickinson College." On both sides the exchange mounted to shrill extravagances until Nisbet was implying Rush was a rogue and a traitor and openly comparing the Trustees with certain meats—"good taken separately, but a mere *hash* when taken collectively"; and Rush, after calling the man foolish, greedy, and treacherous, gave it as his professional opinion that the principal was insane.<sup>23</sup> The result was that Nisbet resigned and Rush gratefully made plans to invite Jonathan Edwards, Jr. from Connecticut. After one experience like that with Nisbet, Montgomery thought the prudent course was to elect a man the Trustees knew. "I see you are fond of the great sages in the eastern countries," Montgomery observed sarcastically of the Edwards infatuation. "Well, then, let us send to China and get one. . . ."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Rush to Montgomery, July 7, 1785.

<sup>23</sup> Rush to Montgomery, Aug. 19, Sept. 25, 1785; The story of these two men is fully told in Morgan, *Dickinson College* and Butterfield, "Benjamin Rush and the Beginnings of John and Mary's College over Susquehanna."

<sup>24</sup> Montgomery to Rush, Oct. 6, 1785.



## THE OTHER MAN ON BINGHAM'S PORCH

Montgomery's asperity indicates the slight tension that existed between him and Rush at this time—the only evidence of lack of mutual confidence which their correspondence reveals. If Montgomery was impatient with Rush's questing after "eastern sages," Rush was suspicious when he learned Montgomery was corresponding with Dr. Ewing, whom Rush was currently battling in an angry newspaper war. The re-election of Nisbet settled the question of the principalship in a way neither Rush nor Montgomery wholly approved, while mutual friends and his own common sense convinced Rush that his suspicions about his friend were groundless.<sup>25</sup>

Montgomery's choice for principal was Robert Davidson. Davidson met two qualifications Montgomery thought important: he was a clergyman whose tact and diplomacy promised to knit the warring factions of Carlisle Presbyterians; and he was a teacher, for more than ten years a member of the faculty of the College and University at Philadelphia. "I do not hesitate to give it as my opinion," he told his fellow Trustees, "that one who has gone through the several grades in teaching from a tutor in an academy to a professor's chair in a university, is in all probability better qualified for, and has a better claim to, the chair of a principal than one who may have had little or no experience in teaching."<sup>26</sup>

For all his faults (and after seeing one of his letters, Benjamin Franklin advised that the sooner such a man was sent back to his own country, the better for America), Nisbet had supporters on the Board. One of them, General Armstrong, was at least as influential locally as Montgomery; and it was Armstrong who

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<sup>25</sup> John King to Rush, April 8, 1786.

<sup>26</sup> Montgomery ["Arguments in favor of electing Dr. Davidson Principal, 1785"], Dickinson College Library. See also Montgomery to Rush, May 7, 1784; John Armstrong to Rush, Nov. 18, 1785.



arranged Nisbet's re-election in the spring of 1786.<sup>27</sup> Montgomery accepted Nisbet and, while never a great friend, worked with him amicably and even effected a sort of reconciliation between the principal and Dr. Rush.<sup>28</sup>

Through these years, through all the years that Montgomery was a Trustee, there sounded the familiar somber litany of dark depression relieved by bursts of fatuous optimism. Rush cried himself hoarse that all was ending well, but the Carlisle Trustees knew otherwise as they faced the hard facts of dwindling enrollment, an empty treasury, and public disesteem. "Although most of the Trustees seem to have the prosperity of the seminary very much at heart," Thomas Smith declared in 1785, "yet I can easily discover that others are either as its enemies, or by their s—l—o—w, t—i—m—i—d dispositions would ruin any thing which requires activity & vigor." "Our cause is the cause of virtue and heaven," Rush assured Montgomery. "The college is becoming a painful business," wrote John King a few years later. "I see certain ruin before us; we are sinking every year and must fall e'er long. . . . No subscriptions can be collected—all is darkness." "I will never be satisfied," wrote Rush, "'till I see our college equal to an European university."<sup>29</sup>

From the unremitting claims upon him as a Trustee, only politics, after business, drew Montgomery's attention. With the declaration of peace his spirits soared. "America will be free," he wrote Robert Magaw with deep feeling when he heard the news. "The day is now come when the sun will raise on America

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<sup>27</sup> Rush to Montgomery, Aug. 19, 1786; John Armstrong to Rush, Nov. 18, 1785.

<sup>28</sup> Montgomery to Rush, Oct. 6, 1785, Sept. 12, 1786; Rush to Montgomery, Sept. 25, 1786; see also John Armstrong to Rush, Dec. 18, 1790.

<sup>29</sup> Rush to Montgomery, April 14, 1783, July 1, 1786; John King to Rush, Nov. 5, 1787; Thomas Smith to Rush, Jan. 23, 1785; Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, I, 345, 348.



never to set. I look forward with pleasure to the happy days that our children will see."<sup>30</sup> But peace, even independence, was not enough. A sound government must be established and, in Pennsylvania, a weak and ridiculous one replaced. Politics demanded a conservative's constructive thought.

Montgomery was a nationalist from the beginning and so a supporter of the federal Constitution of 1787. For states which denied the Confederation government the power it needed he reserved his strongest condemnation. "The cursed states ought to be erased out of the Confederation, and I was going to say out of the earth, if any worse place could be found for them."<sup>31</sup> Not all western Pennsylvania shared John Montgomery's Federalist views, however. His own Cumberland County elected anti-Federalists to the state ratifying convention. "What a pack of sorry scoundrels," he snorted when the returns were in. A political riot in the town square in December 1787 left feelings tense. "Our situation is exceeding disagreeable—neighbors rubbing close as they pass and not a word spoken. . . . Nothing ever happened so bad amongst us." Alarmed for public order and personal safety, the Federalists formed themselves into a vigilante committee "to support the law, peace and good order, and to protect each other from outrage and insult."<sup>32</sup> Montgomery was a particular target of the radicals, and after him the College and its Federalist principal. "Bloody anti-Federals" damned Dickinson as a nursery of Federalism and depreciated all learning as unnecessary in a commonwealth. Nisbet retorted vigorously by praying publicly each Sunday that the radicals be cured of their ig-

<sup>30</sup> Montgomery to Robert Magaw, Feb. 13, 1783, Lamberton Scotch-Irish Collection, II, 43, HSP.

<sup>31</sup> Montgomery to Edward Hand, July 26, 1784, Charles Francis Jenkins Collection, HSP.

<sup>32</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine, Oct. 9, 1787, Jan. 9, 19, 1788, Irvine Papers, IX, 99, 113, 114, HSP.



norance and barbarity; and they rejoined by burning the principal in effigy, along with James Wilson and the Chief Justice of the State, the latter handsomely appareled in a good coat, hat, wig, and ruffled shirt.<sup>33</sup>

With the federal Constitution adopted, the state's conservatives turned to the radical state constitution. A new and conservative instrument was drafted in 1790. Montgomery wished it were more conservative than it was. State senators, he thought, should be chosen by electors, or at least by "substantial freeholders"; and the governor should be chosen by electors, or by a joint ballot of the two houses of the Assembly. "The people at large," he declared out of his experience with the Carlisle mob, "are not the best judges of the most fit men to fill those important places."<sup>34</sup> Throughout the 1790's his interest in politics remained alive. He had been elected chief burgess of Carlisle in 1787; in 1794 he was appointed an associate judge of the county. Governor Mifflin sought his advice on local appointments, and he gave it unasked on political slate-making.<sup>35</sup> More and more, however, he was only an observer and, with Rush, a commentator on the holocaust which democracy and Napoleon were lighting in France and Europe. If American statesmen only acted wisely and firmly and preserved a strict neutrality, he was confident, "we may be happy, while Europe must and will be miserable. It is our great happiness that we are at so great a distance from that unfortunate country."<sup>36</sup>

The second problem which confronted the Trustees at their

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<sup>33</sup> Montgomery to Rush, June 12, 1788.

<sup>34</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine (copy), Aug. 3, 1790, Irvine Papers, X, 56, HSP.

<sup>35</sup> Montgomery to Thomas Mifflin, April 13, 1791, Governors Papers, Justices of the Peace and Aldermen, Cumberland County, State Records Office, Harrisburg; Montgomery to William Irvine, Aug. 28, 1792, Irvine Papers, XI, 23, HSP.

<sup>36</sup> Montgomery to Rush, June 22, 1803.



organizing meeting in 1783 was that of adequate housing for their college. Though he was not present, Montgomery was named to a committee "to make enquiry for a proper lot not less than 12 acres . . . to prepare a drawing of the college, & to make an estimate of the expence of purchase and building."<sup>37</sup> The expense of purchase and building was too great for the resources of the college for nearly twenty years and more modest arrangements had to be made.

A brick schoolhouse was already built in Carlisle. It was too small and it needed repairs. Even the expense of readying the building for college classes was more than the Trustees had in cash, and there were delays. "What are you doing at Carlisle?" Rush demanded impatiently. "Do set to work immediately—or some of the trustees will think of removing the college" to Hanover or Harrisburg. "For Shame—for shame." Rush's exhortations and Montgomery's persistence had their effects: the school was made ready in 1784, subsequently an addition was made to the building, and when that proved insufficient, Montgomery rented a room in the courthouse.<sup>38</sup>

The quarters thus provided it was expected would be only temporary. On the banks of the Letort Creek east of the town stood a collection of buildings the government had erected during the war as an ordnance depot. Though they were in various stages of completion and squatters were making their homes in some, the Trustees considered them suitable for a college, and instructed Montgomery, Rush, and James Wilson to negotiate for their rent or purchase.<sup>39</sup> The committee's memorial reached Congress in January, 1785; Rush's friends all protested their

<sup>37</sup> Trustees Minutes, Sept. 15, 1783, Dickinson College Library.

<sup>38</sup> Rush to Montgomery, Dec. 29, 1784; Trustees Minutes, I, 160, 168, 169, Dickinson College Library.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, April 7, 1784; John Armstrong to Rush, Dec. 13, 1784.



deep concern for the promotion of literature and learning, and Rush informed the Carlisle Trustees confidently that the Public Works would soon be theirs. Montgomery, as usual, was cautious, for the college was already satisfactorily accommodated and functioning in the brick schoolhouse, and repairs to the Works would be costly. Expenditures for such purposes, he warned, must be kept at a minimum "in order that we may have it in our power to pay the teachers with punctuality and to employ as many as may be necessary. Perhaps the reputation of the seminary may depend more on these circumstances than any other."<sup>40</sup>

Before Congress could decide whether to dispose of the Works, Rush changed his mind about their fitness for a college. Dr. Nisbet, who had been installed in a single dwelling there, had fallen seriously ill with his whole family. Rush now considered the Works "*as a pest-house.*" To push "the mad scheme of renting the Works" spelled the "annihilation of the college." He would resign, he assured Montgomery, sooner than share "in the disgrace of strangling our college." Rent the courthouse, add to the schoolhouse again, move the college to Chambersburg, do anything but move to the Works.<sup>41</sup>

Montgomery knew what value to place on Rush's threat to resign, and the Trustees continued to negotiate for the Works. Nisbet was strong to acquire the public buildings. John Dickinson, too, approved them.<sup>42</sup> Then in 1787 the Carlisle Trustees heard a report that the Continental Congress might move to Carlisle, and their sympathies were divided. "What would you think of the Public Works for a federal town?" Montgomery anxiously asked his friend and neighbor General William

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<sup>40</sup> Burnett, *Letters*, VIII, 12, 17, 18-19, 22-23; Montgomery to Rush, April 1, 1785.

<sup>41</sup> Rush to —, Sept. 9, 1785.

<sup>42</sup> John Dickinson to John Armstrong, March 15, 1787, Dreer Collection, HSP.



Irvine, now in Congress. "It would not be a crime, I suppose, to make such a proposition, but it would destroy our hopes of having it for a college." As for Montgomery, his loyalty was to the college. "I wish that it was determined in favor of the College," he concluded firmly.<sup>43</sup>

Dissatisfied with the tiny schoolhouse, unsuccessful in acquiring the Public Works, the Trustees had no alternative but to erect a building of their own. "It is high time," Montgomery wrote General Irvine in June 1792, "that we were preparing for building our college. The money will slip out of the treasury, and we shall be left in the lurch." A committee was authorized to ask John Penn, the last proprietary governor of the colony, to give the Trustees a lot for their building; William Irvine was asked to have an architect draft a plan. "Pray don't forget to send the plan of a college house," Montgomery reminded him. "I find a disposition in many to go on with the building and I think that it is best to take them while in the humor." Irvine gave the commission to John Keen, a member of the Carpenters Company of Philadelphia, once an apprentice of Robert Smith, who designed Nassau Hall at Princeton, prototype of a long series of American college buildings.<sup>44</sup> The plans were finished in November, perhaps too hastily executed, Montgomery thought. "The plan of a college house is arrived," he wrote Irvine.

The man who made them is no draftsman and his charge of 5£ is too high. The plan of our meeting house cost only 5£ and it was done in an elegant manner, with a bill of scantling and directions for framing and explanations of every part of the work.

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<sup>43</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine, Oct. 9, 1787, Irvine Papers, IX, 99, HSP; see also Montgomery to Irvine, March 27, 1787, *ibid.*, 65.

<sup>44</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine, June 11, Aug. 28, Sept. 17, 1792, Irvine Papers, XI, 14, 23, 29, HSP; Trustees Minutes, May 2, Dec. 18, 1792, Dickinson College Library; Charles E. Peterson, "Carpenters Hall," *American Philosophical Society Transactions*, XLIII, pt. 1. (1953), 122.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

However I wish this house was as nearly completed as the meeting house is. . . . Was there only 5 active trustees I should have no doubt of success, but as it is I am in doubts of succeeding. I think that we can get the mason work done for about £500.<sup>45</sup>

At their next meeting, three weeks later, the Trustees resolved to go ahead with the building. "The college house is to be built agreeable to the plan that you sent," Montgomery told Irvine. "No fault found to it."<sup>46</sup>

Before anything could be built, of course, money must be found and a site acquired. The legislature was disinclined to make any appropriation. "We must do the best that we can," Montgomery concluded. As for land, which the Trustees were confident John Penn would donate, they soon learned that that person no longer felt the obligation to the state he had felt when he was one of the Proprietors. If the Trustees wanted a lot, they could buy it. And so the matter dragged on from month to month, and year to year. "It is high time to make preparations," Montgomery would urge impatiently; building must begin at once if the college house was to be roofed before winter. The Trustees even made another effort to buy the Public Works, but they were not for sale.<sup>47</sup> Not until 1799 did the Board purchase a site at last; on July 20, five months before title passed, John Montgomery laid the cornerstone of the new building.

It took nearly four years to complete. When there was money, the work went forward; when the funds were exhausted, the carpenters and stone-masons were discharged, and the principal and Trustees dunned the non-paying subscriber or solicited new

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<sup>45</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine, Nov. 26, 1792, Irvine Papers, XI, 45, HSP.

<sup>46</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine, Dec. 19, 1792; Thomas Duncan to Irvine, Jan. 2, 1793, *ibid.*, XI, 51, 61.

<sup>47</sup> Montgomery to William Irvine, Feb. 26, 1793; John Armstrong to Irvine, [March], 1793; Montgomery to Irvine, March 25, 1795, *ibid.*, XI, 76, 87, XIII, 22; Trustees Minutes, June 21, 1797, Dickinson College Library.



funds in Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York. "Our college affairs wear but a melancholy appearance," Montgomery informed Rush in 1801. "Nothing farther done to the new building since the roof was got on, and uncertain when there will. . . . Our trustees are become exceeding inactive . . . none . . . will move a foot to solicit assistance." Dickinson College, he concluded unhappily, began to "stagger, but we must hope for the best and for better times."<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps Montgomery's discouragement owed something to his own bad health. In September, 1800, too sick to write himself, he dictated a letter to Rush which he reckoned "in all human probability" would be the last he would write his friend. A few weeks before he had caught a heavy cold when exhausted by working long hours on the overcrowded docket of the county court. An infection developed in his leg; "a mortification" followed, and the doctors cut away some of the flesh. He had pains in heart and stomach, suffered fits of suffocation and strong spasms which no medicine relieved. "I submit myself to that heavenly physician to whom all things are possible."<sup>49</sup>

Rush was full of medical advice and moral assurance. "A Dieu! my dear-dear friend. You cannot fail of being happy in any issue of your disease. Even death to you will be the beginning of life. Again À Dieu!" The disease was not fatal, though Montgomery kept to his bed for five months and the leg healed very slowly. He never walked easily again, horseback riding hurt him, he used crutches frequently and had to be carried distances in a chair.<sup>50</sup> With characteristic patience Montgomery bore his long

<sup>48</sup> Montgomery to Rush, May 2, 1801; Trustees Minutes, May 9, 1800, Montgomery to William Irvine, Aug. 16, 1799, Dickinson College Library.

<sup>49</sup> Montgomery to Rush, Sept. 20, 1800.

<sup>50</sup> Rush to Montgomery, Sept. 25, 1800; Montgomery to William Irvine, March 8, 1804, Dreer Collection, HSP. See also Rush to Montgomery, Oct. 18, 1800, and Montgomery to Rush, Sept. 15, 1801.

convalescence and infirmity and found a quiet pleasure in "Happy Retreat," his 227-acre farm just west of town, where he moved as soon as he was able. "Everything looks gay and pleasant," he wrote soon afterwards; "the wheat and clover fields green and the fruit trees in bloom have a very agreeable appearance. Our house is small but comfortable. I am much pleased with my situation."<sup>51</sup>

Montgomery's long illness had a noticeable effect on both men. Rush was warmer, almost tender, in saluting his old friend: "My dear & venerable friend, . . . be assured no one esteems & loves you more than your sincere and affectionate Benjamin Rush."<sup>52</sup> Montgomery dwelt more often on religious themes. Both indulged in reflections on the labors of twenty years in rearing their child and their brat and in earnest wishes that they might meet once more.<sup>53</sup>

Carried into town, hobbling about on "crouches," Montgomery resumed some of his activities in 1802.<sup>54</sup> He attended the Trustees meetings as usual; he was a supervisor of the construction of the college house, slowly, yet demonstrably nearing completion. In the winter of 1802-1803 it was nearly finished. Then in February disaster struck:

we had got three Rooms finished in the new Building and were occopayed by the Student about 4 or 5 weake very Comfortably the Building was nearly finished had a Grand appearance was ornamentall and Elegent had 12 Large apartments but as all

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<sup>51</sup> Montgomery to Rush, May 2, July 28, 1801; Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 834.

<sup>52</sup> Rush to Montgomery, June 10, 1804; but see also Rush to Montgomery, Jan. 13, 1799.

<sup>53</sup> Rush to Montgomery, Jan. 9, 1802; Montgomery to Rush, July 28, 1801, May 14, 1802.

<sup>54</sup> Montgomery to John Dickinson, May 14, 1802, Maria Dickinson Logan Papers, HSP.



things are uncertain in this world and that our Joys and Comforts and not be Compleat or parmient that noble fine house was yesterday redusced to ashes by accidence occassioned by putting hot ashese in the Sellar about 11 oClock a Voulant Bold wind had Blown Sparks to Shavaing or other stuff and not Being Decovred in time the whole Building was instantly in flames and thus my friend after all our trouble and Exspence in Erecting an Elegant and Comfortable house for Dickinson College our hops were Blasted in a few minutes my Eies Beheld the Distroying flames with an ackening Hart I need not tell you how full on this meloncoley occassing you will know them by your owen feellings this has happned at an unfortunate [time] . . . youll please to Excuse this incorect acct my mind is too much Disturbed to give you a more Correct acct of it. . . .<sup>55</sup>

Rush's first reaction was typically egocentric. The destruction of the college house appeared to him as another of the frustrations of the labors of his life. His only consolation was the knowledge that he had aimed well. "What is to be done?" he demanded, abruptly putting himself aside. "Shall we sit down in despair and give up our college for lost? By no means! To what quarter shall we fly for relief? . . . Our principal and first resource," he continued, answering his own question, "should be in the patriotism and humanity of our state legislature. . . . There is not an hour to be lost in this business. . . . Let us strike while the iron is hot, and may Heaven kindly bless and prosper our efforts to revive the object of our labors and affections."<sup>56</sup>

The legislature lacked neither patriotism nor humanity; at least it loaned the college \$6,000 for seven years. Subscription lists were opened. "We have some consolation," Montgomery

<sup>55</sup> Montgomery to Rush, Feb. 4, 1803, reprinted in Morgan, *Dickinson College*, 87.

<sup>56</sup> Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 855-856.

informed John Dickinson, who had not attended a meeting of the Board for nineteen years, "that before the smoking ruins had time to cool, a subscription was opened and near four thousand dollars subscribed. . . . We can count now on about sixteen thousand dollars, which will enable the trustees to enlarge the plan so as to board the students in college. . . . We are preparing materials to commence the new building and hope to have it in forwardness against the fall." John Dickinson expressed his deep distress at the college's loss; he wished he might make the institution a gift, but that would be inconvenient. He asked Montgomery to convey his good wishes to Trustees and faculty whom he knew.<sup>57</sup>

As for Rush, the plan to board students in the college was something he would not approve. To enlarge the building for any purpose would "require more money to finish than you will collect in half a century in our country"; while "crowding boys under one roof," he was sure, "has always been found unfriendly to order and hurtful to morals." Don't get "swamped in mortar," he pled; the money already subscribed would replace the lost building. "Let the next generation extend and enlarge it, if it should be necessary."<sup>58</sup> But the Carlisle Trustees pushed forward on their enlarged plan.

"We have got a plan of a house drawn by Mr. Henry Latrobe," Montgomery wrote in June.

It is plain and simple, roomy and convenient and will have an elegant appearance, four storeys, to be built with stones. . . . We will be able to finish so much of it as will accommodate all the students that may attend here for 10 or 15 years for about nine thousand

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<sup>57</sup> Montgomery to John Dickinson, April 25, 1803, John Dickinson to Montgomery (draft), May 23, 1803, Maria Dickinson Logan Papers, HSP.

<sup>58</sup> Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 866.



dollars. We have had complaints from different quarters that the students could not lodge in college. The new building will prevent complaints of this kind in future. . . . I am much pleased with the present plan. . . .<sup>59</sup>

Construction of the second building proceeded more rapidly than the first; in February, 1804, a year after the fire, Montgomery was confident that the structure would be completed that summer. Difficulty in finding bricks for the inner walls delayed the roofing;<sup>60</sup> even in November, 1805, it was not all ready for occupancy. Only a part of the building was finished, Montgomery told John Dickinson; about forty students might now be accommodated. "The whole will be finished in the spring," he continued, "when the trustees propose to employ a steward and the students are to board and lodge in college. The house will lodge about eighty comfortably and [provide] room for one of the professors and the steward. The house is 4 storeys, about 40 apartments. . . . The house is built of stone, has an elegant and grand appearance, has a handsome cupola. Were it possible to prevail on you to pay us a visit . . . you would be highly gratified to behold such a building to the establishing of the college new, for which you contributed so large and which will record your name until time shall be no more." Dickinson uttered a prayer "that the establishment may be blessed with usefulness in promoting the interests of sound learning, morality and religion."<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, with the death of Dr. Nisbet in 1804, the question of a successor pressed on the Board. "Until we secure another

<sup>59</sup> Montgomery to Rush, June 22, 1803.

<sup>60</sup> Montgomery to John Dickinson, Feb. 7, 1804, Maria Dickinson Logan Papers, HSP; Montgomery to Rush, May 21, 1804.

<sup>61</sup> Montgomery to John Dickinson, Nov. 20, 1805, John Dickinson to Montgomery (draft of reply), Maria Dickinson Logan Papers, HSP.

principal," Rush observed, "remember our college is a widow and our students are orphans. . . ." Some Trustees urged Samuel Miller of New York, a distinguished scholar and clergyman; but Montgomery thought he knew too much about Dickinson to accept the post. Rush then recommended Ashbel Green, a Presbyterian minister of Philadelphia. "Offer him a generous salary," Rush advised, "and trust to providence and the Doctor's talents and character to pay it."<sup>62</sup> And, as always, there was the problem of finances. The Trustees had planned in the hope that John Dickinson would make a generous bequest; when Montgomery learned he left nothing outside his family, he suggested another line. If the Board would elect Dickinson's son-in-law, he suggested, perhaps that gentleman would regard it as a compliment and make a donation. "You see that I am mercenary. I acknowledge it and that I always was for our college, our hobby horse. I hope and wish," he continued to Rush, "that you and I may live to see it in a more flourishing state than it [has] yet been." "Keep up your spirits," Rush replied with undimmed confidence. "*All—all will end well.*"<sup>63</sup>

Buildings, endowments, principals—these were matters that had occupied most of Montgomery's thought and energy as a Trustee through nearly a quarter of a century. Yet they were all only means to the end of educating young men. Montgomery's last recorded thoughts for Dickinson—perhaps his most appealing actions—were not of the college house, or of funds, or even of Nisbet's successor; but of the philosophical apparatus which a lumbering market wagon was bringing up from Philadelphia on one of the last days of August, 1808. Though he was now past eighty and younger men like Dr. John Armstrong, Jr., and

<sup>62</sup> Montgomery to Rush, July 15, 1808; Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 969, 973.

<sup>63</sup> Montgomery to Rush, Aug. 13, 1808; Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 973.



## THE OTHER MAN ON BINGHAM'S PORCH

James Hamilton were taking over responsibilities on the Board, John Montgomery was as eager about this new accession of the college as he had been about erecting the college house itself. Rush had thoughtfully provided him an account of the apparatus—an air pump, a galvanic apparatus, and an electrical machine which Rush proclaimed was “the most complete and splendid thing of the kind ever imported into our country.” Montgomery had replied with explicit instructions for packing and shipping.<sup>64</sup>

Montgomery's biographer may be permitted to hope that he could marvel at an impromptu demonstration of scientific phenomena; or at least that he could witness their unpacking; to hope, in short, that Montgomery ended as he began—this semi-literate upstate farmer, merchant, Indian fighter, and judge—performing one more act to shed the light of science over the western world.

The end came soon after, at “Happy Retreat,” on September 3, 1808. When he heard the news, Rush wrote an epitaph for the man he once called “good old John Montgomery”: “He was a man of sound sense and great zeal in the cause of religion and learning. The college of Carlisle was indebted greatly to his labors for its existence. He retained his faculties and continued his usefulness to the last week of his life. . . . Blest saint! À Dieu!”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 969; Montgomery to James Hamilton, Dec. 12, 1807, July 18, 1808, Dickinson College Library; Montgomery to Rush, Aug. 13, 18, 1808.

<sup>65</sup> Butterfield, *Letters of Rush*, II, 972; George W. Corner, ed., *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush* (Princeton, 1948), 314.

## JOHN DICKINSON AND THE FEDERAL CONSTITUTION\*



*James Miller Tunnell, Jr.*

STRICTLY speaking, our federal Constitution has its roots in the very earliest struggles of mankind for liberty and property. In such a broad sense, of course, it would not be possible here to recite even the names of all those who materially contributed to its genesis. Expediency, therefore, thrusts upon us a much narrower view, one in which we may sensibly say that the first step toward the formulation of our Constitution was taken on the 21st day of January, 1786, when the Assembly of the State of Virginia called for a general convention of commissioners to consider the unsatisfactory conditions of commerce among the states. From this call—which, by the way, totally ignored the amendment procedure specified in the Articles of Confederation—resulted in what we know as the Annapolis Convention (11 Sept. 1786), presided over by John Dickinson, one of the commissioners from Delaware.

The Annapolis Convention, in turn, concluded in a resolution that another convention, which it was hoped would be better attended, should be held in Philadelphia on the second Monday in May of the following year, 1787, and suggesting—albeit with some diffidence—that the proper regulation of com-

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\* *Justice Tunnell is a member of the Supreme Court of Delaware. The lecture was delivered on February 20, 1953.*



merce might lead to consideration of "other important matters." Congress at once concurred and legally called such a general convention, directing it to consider not merely matters of commerce, as the Virginia Assembly had suggested, but "to take into consideration the situation of the United States" and to design a revision of the Articles of Confederation which would "render the federal Constitution adequate to the exigencies of the government and the preservation of the Union."

To that, the great convention, as a deputy from Delaware, came John Dickinson,<sup>1</sup> the "Penman of the Revolution," whose writings had at first done so much toward implanting into colonial British subjects some understanding of their own rights, as opposed to those of the mother country, and had later done so much toward instilling into free Americans the first vague sense of a national character.

Bred to the law, privately tutored by the young Irishman, William Killen, who himself went on to achieve eminence in later life, saturated with classical, medieval, and modern political science, schooled in the Middle Temple of London in the intricacies of English law, polished at the Philadelphia Bar, John Dickinson had somehow acquired and retained the gift of writing on subjects of the most monumental difficulty with remarkable directness and simplicity. In some mysterious way he was able to give to the written word that vitality which others were rarely able to supply in conversation, debate, or oratory. Far from being robust in physique, he was, nevertheless, in 1787, at the height of his mental powers.

Candor compels us to acknowledge that, while he was an effective speaker, his oral utterances failed sometimes to share the unanimous acclaim enjoyed by his writings.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Charles J. Stillé, *The Life and Times of John Dickinson* (Philadelphia, 1891).

<sup>2</sup> See Major William Pierce's "Sketches" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. III.



From the time, at the age of twenty-eight, when he had been elected Speaker of the Assembly of the Lower Counties—that is to say, Delaware—he had, with only a very brief interval, been continuously engaged in public life, serving in the Assemblies and Councils of both Delaware and Pennsylvania, and serving as president of each of those states. None was more intimately acquainted with men of influence throughout the land. None had a more detailed first-hand knowledge of all such political activities on our side of the Atlantic as might in any sense be termed national. He had been the sole or a collaborating author of every state paper of the first order of importance, with the single exception of the Declaration of Independence. He had been a member of the Stamp Act Congress in 1765 and had drafted the petition of that unhappy senate to the king. He had been elected to both Continental Congresses and had there served during four years of the Revolution. He had drafted the second petition of the Congress to the king. He is acknowledged by all to have had the principal hand in drafting the Articles of Confederation, and some historians give him sole credit for the composition of the original draft.

In respect to the Declaration of Independence, although he had strenuously opposed it, he had, of course, necessarily concentrated his closest and most conscientious study upon it and had deliberately sacrificed his immense popularity—even to the point of being at times subjected to acute personal humiliation—in leading the "moderates" in their fight against it.

There was, in short, nothing in the circumstances of the severance of the colonies from the British Empire, or in the first halting steps which they took alone, with which John Dickinson was not intimately acquainted. He was a conspicuously strong and well-informed man in that famous company of strong, well-informed men.



It is a mark of the measure of John Dickinson that he frankly regarded the prospect of being longer left to drift under the Articles of Confederation as the threat of a calamity. Yet the Articles of Confederation, as we noted a moment ago, were to a very large extent his own handiwork.

In some respects, I suppose, it is regrettable that there is no transcript of the debates of the constitutional convention. Historians would have found in them tense drama. But the object of those devoted men in Philadelphia was to frame a constitution, not to declaim for the edification of posterity. They desired most of all ultimately to stand together for ratification, and they did not propose themselves to furnish the criticisms which, when repeated by others, might become the means of defeat.

And it takes little reflection to appreciate that their course of preserving maximum secrecy was wise on another count. Not the least virtue of that noble instrument has been its quality of elasticity, from which it derives its capacity, a century and a half after its ratification, to give immense satisfaction to the people of the United States and inspiration to persons everywhere who are free or who aspire to freedom. Certainly a transcript of the debates would have impaired that elasticity.

The incomplete records of the convention which we do have, however, are sufficient to disclose that John Dickinson was a consistently hard and effective worker. James Madison, in his private journal—not published until 1840—mentions Dickinson's actions or attitudes something over fifty times. As to many features of the Constitution, his voice appears to have been controlling. As to others, of course, his views were not adopted, as, for instance, his proposal to extend to a majority of the state legislatures the power to remove the president; or his proposal to have each of the several states in every presidential year elect one of its citizens as its candidate for the national presidency, and then



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

to have the electoral college make the final choice from this list of favorite sons; or his suggestion that each state's representation in the lower house of Congress be in proportion to the amount of tax money its citizens pay into the federal treasury. But whether or not his views happened to meet with the approval of others, he was constantly at work, both privately and in public, from time to time putting searching questions, directing shrewd criticism, or lending powerful support, according to his judgment of the merits of the matter at hand.

At one point in particular, failure of the convention's purpose seemed inevitable. The factual details are too familiar to require elaboration in this company, but I refer to the conviction of the large states that the very essence of democracy required the several states to be represented in the National Congress in proportion to their respective populations, and to the determination of the small states that representation must be by states. Delaware took an extreme position. When it appeared that the large states might attempt to force their will upon the small ones, John Dickinson himself said to James Madison that Delaware "would sooner submit to a foreign rule than be deprived in both branches of an equality of suffrage and thereby be thrown to the domination of the larger states."

Some would find these words of Dickinson inflammatory. To understand them so, however, would be a severe injustice to a keenly conscientious man. John Dickinson was not merely confining himself within the powers defined in his credentials; he sensed the public will. He knew what the people of the small states would agree to. A realist, he considered that any workable system was necessarily limited by the bounds of the people's patience.

At this stage of the debate, when defeat seemed imminent, it was John Dickinson who ultimately came forward with the pro-



posal which put into the American Constitution the unique feature of popular legislative representation on two bases. An unsigned paper in his handwriting says that he was the author of the compromise, and we have no cause to doubt his statement.<sup>3</sup> It is not possible to say whether or to what extent the idea was original with Dickinson, but it is not an exaggeration to say that his solution saved the convention. The ingenious device thereby installed into our government stands as striking evidence of the resourcefulness and common sense which it is possible for a republican form of government to exercise when the people are ably and honorably represented.

John Dickinson's vigor in striving in behalf of the small states is the more remarkable when we recall that he himself could at any time draw comfort from the prestige of the great State of Pennsylvania, where he had pursued his profession and spent the greater part of his adult life, a state which had conferred upon him all the varieties of honors within its power to bestow.

But, as great as was his undoubted contribution to the framing of the Constitution, it is not certain but that those services were exceeded in value by what he did for its ratification. Some elements entirely loyal to America were working with apparent effect to defeat the proposed new constitution. The issue was in serious doubt. The principles involved were basic and of a character incapable of mathematical demonstration. It was at this stage that John Dickinson again took up his pen in a series of articles signed "Fabius," which were widely published at home and abroad, and which are everywhere acknowledged to have had a powerful influence in turning the scale in favor of ratification. Though his feelings on the subject were intense, yet his style was never more dispassionate, never more logical, never more dis-

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<sup>3</sup> See *Delaware Day*, 1947, Richard S. Rodney, p. 9.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

armingly persuasive. Our debt to John Dickinson for this, the first series of Fabius letters, is incalculable.

Viewing the entire scene in retrospect, it is not melodramatic to say that the life and character of John Dickinson had apparently been designed toward his participation in framing our Constitution as the climax of his public life. He may, indeed, have sensed the same, for after that Convention (concluded 165 years ago today), though he was aged only fifty-five, a man of handsome fortune and ample leisure, restored in popularity, he never afterward sought or would accept public office. When his name was urged for a place in the new United States Senate, he gratefully, but nevertheless firmly, declined to be considered. Afterwards, except for occasional writings, he lived in retirement.

There is one postscript which justice to the stature of John Dickinson makes it appropriate for us to append. Sixteen years after his retirement, the Louisiana Purchase was consummated. He desperately desired slavery not to gain a foothold in the new west, so he wrote to his kinsman, Senator Logan from Pennsylvania, assailing the entire institution of "bondage," as he referred to it, in tones as vigorous as those of his youth, and concluded his letter with these words:

The theme is inexhaustible. Let the pernicious project, the detestable precedent never be sanctioned by votes of sons of liberty.

John Dickinson then was old. He had witnessed and fought in our first great civil war, the one which resulted in division. It was not for him or his generation to witness the next, the one which would result in union. It was characteristic of the man, however, that his mind unerringly reached out for the next great issue in the evolution of freedom. For in the mind and heart of John Dickinson dwelt not merely the form of the Constitution, but also its living spirit.



## JOHN DICKINSON AND THE QUAKERS\*



*Frederick B. Tolles*

STRICTLY speaking, John Dickinson was, of course, no Quaker. At least, no one has been able to find a scrap of documentary proof that he was ever a member of any Friends meeting.<sup>1</sup> Yet he was reared in a Quaker home and married into the Quaker aristocracy of Philadelphia. In his latter days he adopted the distinctive Quaker manner of speech, became a regular attendee at meeting, interested himself in Quaker humanitarian and educational concerns. He was buried in a Quaker graveyard. In death as in life he was "just among Friends." It is a commonplace of historical writing to suggest that this circumambient Quaker influence somehow rubbed off on him; that, consciously or unconsciously, he thought, spoke, and acted like a Friend in the major phases of his eventful life. Yet no one has ever tried to say with exactness just what that Quaker influence was or just how it expressed itself in Dickinson's thought and action. It is the purpose of this lecture to pin down this elusive "Quaker influence." It is the hope of the lecturer that in the process he can

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\* Dr. Frederick B. Tolles is Director of the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. His most recent book is a biography, *George Logan of Philadelphia*. The lecture was delivered on March 9, 1956.

<sup>1</sup>On this point I accept the negative findings of J. H. Powell in "John Dickinson: Character of a Revolutionist," *Friends in Wilmington, 1738-1938* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 87-88; and Isaac Sharpless in *Political Leaders of Provincial Pennsylvania* (New York, 1919), pp. 236-43.

shed light on some of the dark places in the career of a great but neglected American, and particularly on the major puzzle of his political career—that "wonderful transformation" which, near the end of his long life, produced what his baffled biographer calls his "peculiar democracy."<sup>2</sup>

I

The facts about Dickinson's Quaker connections and relationships can be quickly stated. His parents were both Friends. Judge Samuel Dickinson, his father, came of an old Quaker family on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, though in his later life, especially after he had been disciplined for consenting to the "disorderly marriage" of his daughter, he seems not to have taken an active part in meeting affairs. The question has sometimes been raised whether John Dickinson was not a "birthright" Friend by virtue of his parents' membership. The answer is quite simple: in 1732, when he was born, there was no such thing as automatic birthright membership for the children of Friends; one was accounted a Friend by reason of "convincement," and that was, almost necessarily, an adult experience.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, Mary Cadwalader Dickinson, his mother, appears to have been a devout and "consistent" Friend, and there is every reason to assume that John had a typical Quaker upbringing—that he was taken regularly to meeting, given Quaker books to read, taught to look within himself for spiritual guidance, to practice habits of simplicity in speech and dress, and to nourish tender concerns for the welfare

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<sup>2</sup> Charles J. Stillé, *The Life and Times of John Dickinson* (Philadelphia, 1891), 279 ff., 434.

<sup>3</sup> The principle of birthright membership was first adopted by London Yearly Meeting in 1737; the American Yearly Meetings took it up somewhat later, probably circa 1755. Allen C. Thomas and Richard H. Thomas, *A History of the Friends in America* (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 109–10.



of others. But when he left home at eighteen to study law in Philadelphia, he broke away from the Quaker atmosphere of his childhood. For the next twenty years—the years of his rise to prestige as a Philadelphia lawyer, provincial politician, and spokesman of America in the pre-Revolutionary years—his contact with Friends was casual and not particularly significant; indeed he became the recognized leader of the anti-Quaker party in Pennsylvania politics.

In 1770 he moved back into the Quaker orbit again. For in that year he married Polly Norris, daughter of the great Quaker politico Isaac Norris, who had for many years been Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly and leader of the "Quaker party." Since Dickinson was not a member, they could not be married under the care of the meeting. For a time Polly's friends were fearful that by this misstep of marrying a non-Quaker she had "slipped from the top of the hill of reputation she had gained in the Society."<sup>4</sup> But she was allowed to retain her membership after condemning "the manner of her marriage," and her husband was presently admitted to the charmed circle of the Philadelphia Quaker aristocracy, though he never applied for membership in the meeting. The Dickinsons moved into Isaac Norris's handsome mansion at Fair Hill and mingled freely with the Quaker grandees—the Logans, Pembertons, Foxes, Drinkers, Morrisises, Emlens. Their daughters were received into membership in the meeting and Maria, the younger girl, eventually married a Logan.

It was his elder daughter, Sally, who brought him back under the sway of Quaker ideas. He liked in later years to tell his friends how it had come about. He proposed to her one day that

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<sup>4</sup> William Logan to John Smith, July 20, 1770, quoted in Stillé, p. 317; MS Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, 1765-1771, E, 8, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

she should take dancing lessons. After all, a teen-age girl of her social position, the daughter of the President of the state, would soon be attending Philadelphia's gala dancing assemblies. To his surprise the girl demurred modestly but firmly. Taken aback, he told her to go to her room and think about it for an hour or two; surely she would think better of this absurd whim. But when she returned, she was still of the same mind. Demurely, she said: "If Father pleases, I had much rather be a Friend."<sup>5</sup> So impressed was he by this evidence of youthful piety that he began to give more attention to religion himself. Quite naturally, his reading and reflection carried him back to his ancestral Quakerism. He took up the "plain language" of the Friends, which he had used in his childhood, began attending Quaker meeting for worship in Wilmington, where he retired in 1785, and undertook a program of pious giving to Quaker causes. For the last twenty years of his life, he was a Friend in nearly everything but name.

## II

If we are to understand this religious influence that touched John Dickinson's career at so many points, we must look beneath the surface of American Quaker life after 1750. Outwardly that life seemed to flow on placidly as it had done during the golden age of the first half of the century. The mercantile aristocrats of Philadelphia continued to divide their time between meeting-house and countinghouse, gathering twice on First Day and once during the week to worship God in the silence, attending Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings with regularity while

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<sup>5</sup> Dickinson told this story later to a friend in Wilmington, who repeated it in at least two letters. James Bringhurst to Thomas Pole, July 1799, Bringhurst Letterbooks, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College; Bringhurst to Elizabeth Coggeshall, October 8, 1799, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London (the latter letter is printed in *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, V [1913], 60-62).



with equal industry and devotion they bought and sold this world's goods and sent their ships, laden with the produce of the Delaware Valley, out to the West Indies, the Wine Islands, and the ports of Europe. They lived comfortably but without ostentation in their handsome brick town houses and fled in summer to their "plantations" on the outskirts of the city. Along with the Quaker doctors and lawyers they supported Benjamin Franklin's civic improvements, read the latest books, patronized Philadelphia's rising group of scientists.<sup>6</sup>

But underneath its calm exterior, Philadelphia Quaker life was undergoing a profound change. When John Dickinson arrived in Philadelphia in 1750, three quarters of a century of Quaker political hegemony was drawing to a close. The actual end came in 1756, just two hundred years ago, when war broke out with the Delaware and Shawnee Indians, and most of the Quaker Assemblymen gave up their seats rather than compromise their religious testimony by voting military measures.<sup>7</sup> This abdication, this withdrawal from government was accompanied by a thoroughgoing "reformation" in the Society of Friends, a kind of spiritual housecleaning. After seventy-five years of immersion in public affairs, a reaction set in. The conviction grew that a "consistent" Friend must resign himself to being "among the quiet in the land," that he could have nothing to do with the struggle for power and the inevitable compromises incident to political life. There was a widespread sense that Friends had already compromised with the world at too many points in their individual and corporate life, and that, having finally retired from the political arena, they must put their spiritual house in order,

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<sup>6</sup> See Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, 1948).

<sup>7</sup> See "The Twilight of the Holy Experiment: A Contemporary View," ed. Frederick B. Tolles, *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, XLV (1956).



cultivate once more the inner life and, so far as outward activity was concerned, occupy themselves chiefly with good works.<sup>8</sup>

Events made their decision irreversible, for when the Revolution came, both Pennsylvania and Delaware passed laws requiring test oaths—we should call them "loyalty oaths"—as conditions of voting or officeholding. Friends bore a traditional religious testimony against swearing oaths of any kind; consequently they found themselves disfranchised, debarred from political activity until the test acts were finally repealed around 1790. By that time they had lost the habit of political action; a new generation had arisen which took little interest in politics, though as men of substance most Quakers tended to lend their passive support to the party dedicated to stability—which meant, in the first years of the new nation, the Federalist party.

During the years when Dickinson was moving among the Philadelphia Friends, the energies they had once channeled into politics were increasingly being drawn into purely religious and charitable activities. These were the years when John Woolman and Anthony Benezet were arousing the consciences of their fellow Quakers to the inhumanity of Negro slavery, when Friends were purging themselves of participation in that social evil and beginning to preach abolition to their non-Quaker neighbors.<sup>9</sup> They were years when Friends were ministering to the needs of other unfortunate groups in society—the suffering Acadian refugees, the confused and dispossessed Indians, the insane, who were commonly treated as criminals, and the criminals, who were treated, whatever their crime, as wild and dangerous

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<sup>8</sup> Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, pp. 234–39; Isaac Sharpless in Rufus M. Jones *et al.*, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (London, 1911), pp. 571–80.

<sup>9</sup> See Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven, 1950), chaps. IV–V.



beasts.<sup>10</sup> They were years of an educational flowering in the Society of Friends, years when Quakers developed a renewed concern for the "guarded education" of their youth, years too of a new testimony for moderation in all things, including the use of alcoholic liquors. And they were years, finally, of the testing and strengthening of the traditional Quaker testimony against war.

Here I must pause and deal with a subject that is too little understood—the role of the Quakers in the American Revolution. In the earliest stages of the revolutionary movement—the period of the Stamp Act and the first non-importation agreements—the Quaker merchants of Philadelphia bore a leading part. They were all good Whigs, as devoted to the principles of liberty and property as anyone in the colonies. It was Isaac Norris, John Dickinson's Quaker father-in-law, who had chosen the inscription for the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof." So long as opposition to British commercial restrictions took the form of dignified remonstrance and non-importation, there was no reason why they should not go along with it and every reason why they should; indeed non-importation seemed eminently "a Quaker method of resistance."<sup>11</sup> The Quaker merchant could read John Dickinson's "Farmer's Letters" with hearty approval, more especially when Dickinson insisted that "the cause of liberty is a cause of too much dignity to be sullied by turbulence and tumult" and hoped that its partisans would "breathe a sedate, yet fervent spirit, animating them to actions of prudence, justice, modesty, bravery, humanity, and magnanimity."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Elbert Russell, *History of Quakerism* (New York, 1942), chap. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (New York, 1918), p. 91; cf. Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy* (Harrisburg, 1954), p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> Letter III, *Writings of John Dickinson*, ed. P. L. Ford (Philadelphia, 1895), p. 324.



But when the "sedate yet fervent spirit" of a Dickinson gave way to the impatience and extremism of a Sam Adams, when it became clear that the colonial resistance movement was headed straight towards the "turbulence and tumult" that Dickinson deplored, the Quakers drew back, mindful of their religious testimony against violence and civil "commotions." They worked and prayed for reconciliation, hoping to stave off the ultimate resort to force. When war finally came, some few of them—the so-called Free Quakers or "fighting Quakers"—abandoned pacifism and fought for the American cause; some few gave active or passive support to the British forces. But the main body of Friends made a determined attempt not to take sides, to achieve neutrality, an attitude of genuine detachment from the struggle.

A Quaker historian once summed up their attitude in these words: "We did not approve the proceedings of the British ministry, which irritated the Americans; we thought them ill-advised, and, in view of their certain effects, wicked; we would have joined with our fellow citizens in peaceful legal resistance to them and have suffered, as we have proven we are able to suffer, for the principles of liberty and justice. But we do not believe in revolutions, and we do not believe in war; we will not be a party to overturning the beneficent charter of William Penn, nor will we aid in throwing off our ultimate allegiance to the king of Great Britain. We, who largely made this Province what it is, and who have shown in the past our capacity for the peaceful maintenance of rights, are utterly opposed to the measures now taken, and disavow all responsibility for them. We cannot recognize the revolutionary government, set up by illegal means, by holding office under it or by affirming allegiance to it; nor will we assist Britain in the unrighteous means taken to conquer rebellious



Provinces; we are out of the whole business, and will give aid or comfort to neither party."<sup>13</sup>

It is never easy to be neutral when the lines are drawn so sharply as they were in 1776. Inevitably the "neutralist," no matter how scrupulously he walks the narrow line of impartiality, will be misunderstood and mistrusted. Both sides will insist that "he who is not for us is against us" and the inevitable result for the hapless neutral will be universal odium and, eventually, suffering. It was so with the Quakers in 1776.<sup>14</sup> But these Friends, newly strengthened by a sense of re-dedication to their religious principles, were prepared for the misunderstanding and the abuse, inwardly fortified as they were by the conviction that God's way was the way of peace and reconciliation, even though that way might lie through the valley of suffering.

If I were to sum up the position of the Quakers during this period of transition, when John Dickinson knew them best, I would say that they were increasingly non-political, though naturally allied with the party of property and stability, and that they were deeply concerned for the human values of equality, liberty, and peace—concerns which carried them beyond the range of attitudes characteristic of most "conservative" groups in their day or in ours. For contemporary confirmation, I can hardly do better than to refer you to the correspondence of Benjamin Rush, a name honored in this institution. Rush was, of course, no Quaker himself; he probably had less personal sympathy with the Quaker viewpoint than John Dickinson did. But the references to Friends in his letters are revealing. He speaks of their "passive conduct" during the Revolution, but associates

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<sup>13</sup> Isaac Sharpless, *A History of Quaker Government in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1899), II, 130-131.

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Gray Vining's recent novel *The Virginia Exiles* reflects the plight of the Philadelphia Friends with admirable faithfulness to the historical facts.

### "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

them in the postwar years with the Republican party, the party in Pennsylvania composed, in his words, of those "distinguished for their wealth, virtue, learning, and liberality of manners" and led by John Dickinson and Robert Morris. His other references to the Friends mention their quiet but effective campaign against Negro slavery, their concern for the moral education of their youth, their steady pressure for the humanizing of the prison system, their leadership in the temperance crusade, and their religious testimony against all war.<sup>15</sup>

### III

How far, we may now ask, did John Dickinson share this set of attitudes? One thing is obvious. He had no sympathy with the Quakers' rejection of political action. From his early days in the Pennsylvania legislature, through his service in the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention and his successive Presidencies of Delaware and Pennsylvania, down to his old age when, from his retirement in Wilmington, he still gave valued advice to younger statesmen, he was a politician to his fingertips. But in his private life his sympathy with the testimonies of the Friends extended farther than has sometimes been realized, and even in his public life he did everything he could to achieve Quaker goals by political means. In a real sense he carried on into the life of the new nation the older tradition of political Quakerism which his father-in-law, Isaac Norris, had once upheld so eminently. At many points his later career parallels that of his younger cousin George Logan, who was a co-inheritor of that tradition and who also stood, for most of his life, just outside the Society of Friends, a Quaker in his instinctive reactions,

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<sup>15</sup> *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton, 1951), pp. 336-37, 371, 417, 441-42, 460, 480, 561.



though not a formal member. Together these two men may be regarded as the residuary legatees of William Penn's "holy experiment" in government.

Like most wealthy Delaware planters, like many Philadelphians in the middle of the eighteenth century, Dickinson was originally a slaveowner. But, as he told a Quaker acquaintance, he presently "became uneasy in his mind" about holding men and women in bondage; in other words, he developed what Friends would call a "concern." At first, he confessed, he tried to "accommodate the matter to himself and them also" by improving their living quarters and in other ways trying "to render a state of slavery easy to them." But it was no use: he still "found his mind disturbed on their account," and finally set them all free, at a cost, he reckoned, of something between eight and ten thousand pounds. Once he had taken this expensive step, he found his mind at peace. (As it turned out, his sense of virtue, his satisfaction in having followed his conscience, was not his only reward; for everything thereafter, so he told his friend, "seemed to prosper in his hands, and, to crown all, his income was abundantly increased, contrary to his expectation."<sup>16</sup>)

Like the Friends, having cleared his own skirts, he now turned his efforts towards erasing human bondage from American society generally. He drew up a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in Delaware, and had it submitted to the legislature in 1786, supported by a Quaker petition.<sup>17</sup> The opposition from the

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<sup>16</sup> James Brinhurst to Elizabeth Coggeshall, October 8, 1799, *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, V, 61-62.

<sup>17</sup> Drake, p. 95. The text of the bill, taken from a manuscript in Dickinson's hand in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is in Stillé, pp. 424-31. Warner Mifflin, the leading Delaware abolitionist and a Friend, collaborated closely with Dickinson in this effort. Only a few years later, it is interesting to note, Mifflin accused Dickinson of being lukewarm in this and other good causes, and told him bluntly that those who "came nearest to the truth and were not in it, and profess it, were its greatest enemies." Mifflin to Henry Drinker, June 27, 1792,



southern counties of Delaware was too strong, however, and Dickinson and his Quaker supporters had to be satisfied with a law that merely encouraged voluntary emancipation. But a year later, Dickinson was standing up in the Constitutional Convention, speaking out for a federal prohibition of the slave trade, insisting that it was "inadmissible on every principle of honor and safety" that the trade should be allowed to continue.<sup>18</sup> The problem never ceased to concern him. In 1804, when he was over seventy, he wrote to his cousin, Senator George Logan, encouraging him to make every effort to see that slavery should be excluded forever from the territory of Louisiana, recently acquired from France.<sup>19</sup>

He shared the other generous humanitarian concerns of the Friends in the same measure. In 1786, not long after the religious "awakening" which he attributed to his daughter's influence, he wrote a revealing letter to his Quaker cousin James Pemberton, one of the staunch pillars of Philadelphia Quakerism: "My mind has been frequently and deeply concerned," he declared, "in observing how very negligent I have been in doing good, and has been particularly engaged in a desire of attending to the duties of humanity so strongly dictated by reason and conscience. . . ." With the letter he sent £200 to be used "for the relief of those poor who may be 'sick and in prison,' under the di-

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Hilda Justice, *Life and Ancestry of Warner Mifflin* (Philadelphia, 1905), p. 104. This letter no doubt reflects the attitude of the stricter, more "consistent" Friends towards Dickinson. A similar attitude was expressed in a letter addressed to him somewhat earlier by the young woman who was to become Mifflin's wife: "If thou wast become a member of Society, thou mightest with just assistance of others also yoked in mind to the service become . . . a vigilant advancer of it into execution." A[nne] Emlen, Junior to John Dickinson, n.d., *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, I, (1906), 36.

<sup>18</sup> Max Farrand, ed. *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven, 1927), II, 372.

<sup>19</sup> Stillé, pp. 324-25; Frederick B. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia* (New York, 1953), pp. 243-44.



rection of Friends in Philadelphia."<sup>20</sup> The money—a considerable sum for charitable purposes in those days—was turned over to the Quaker-inspired Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons and thus helped to launch what has been called "the first of the great modern prison reform societies."<sup>21</sup>

Of Dickinson's zeal to promote education it is hardly necessary to speak in this institution which bears his name. What I want to point out is that most of his educational efforts, outside of his benefactions to this college, were directed towards supporting and strengthening Quaker schools and particularly toward extending the benefits of Quaker education to the children of the poor. In 1794 he and his wife gave £200 to the Friends of Wilmington for "the education of poor children . . . without any distinction of religious profession" in the Monthly Meeting schools.<sup>22</sup> And even before this, in 1790, he had laid the foundation of a major advance in Quaker education by offering Philadelphia Yearly Meeting a large sum of money to build its first boarding school, a school where he wished "the most advantageous branches of literature" to be taught, along with more practical subjects. The Friends hesitated for several years before deciding to accept his gift. To adopt his plan would mean a departure from the reigning Quaker philosophy of a "religiously guarded education." Dickinson's educational views were obviously much broader than those of the more traditional Friends, and he was at pains to make the issue quite clear. "Some worthy persons," he wrote James Pemberton, "slight learning too much because wonderful acts have been done by illiterate men. . . .

<sup>20</sup> Stillé, p. 328.

<sup>21</sup> Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Evolution of Penology in Pennsylvania* (Indianapolis, 1927), p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> MS Minutes of Wilmington Monthly Meeting, 1792-1810, p. 48, Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.



No general inference can be justly drawn from such instances. So assured am I that learning and religion will be found to agree together, that I think it the indispensable duty of those who revere religion to cultivate learning in order to counteract the mischiefs flowing from its perversions and apply it to its proper use."<sup>23</sup>

The Yearly Meeting finally came around to accepting the money and used it in 1799 to found the first American Quaker boarding school at Westtown, Pennsylvania. The controversy which Dickinson's gift set off did not die, however; its reverberations can be caught, many years later, in the onslaughts of Edward Hicks, the painter of "The Peaceable Kingdom," against Quaker boarding schools as "nurseries of pride, indolence, and effeminacy, the bane of true republicanism and the most effective contrivances of Satan for the destruction of primitive Christianity."<sup>24</sup> This strain of anti-intellectualism ran far back in the Quaker tradition. But there was another side of the tradition to which Dickinson could appeal—the liberal culture of the Quaker merchant aristocracy, of which his father-in-law, Isaac Norris, had been a notable exemplar, as anyone can see who will take the trouble to examine the books from his library which John Dickinson gave to Dickinson College.

So far Dickinson's attitudes seem consonant with those of the Quaker aristocrats of his time. He never pretended, however, to share their pacifism, their conviction that all war was contrary to the spirit of Christianity. Everyone knows how he served faithfully in the militia during the Revolution, both as an officer and as a private in the ranks. Like his cousin George Logan, he had a

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<sup>23</sup> Stillé, p. 330. For the Quaker conception of a "guarded education" see Howard H. Brinton, *Quaker Education in Theory and Practice* (Wallingford, Penna., 1949), pp. 45-54.

<sup>24</sup> *Memoirs of the Life and Religious Labors of Edward Hicks* (Philadelphia, 1851), pp. 19-20, 31-32.



passionate and rather naive faith in the militia, not only as an adequate military safeguard for the country but as a "panacea for all political evils," a sure bulwark against the attempt of any adventurer to seize power and subvert the liberties of a free people.<sup>25</sup> In Logan's case this antique republican faith led to disownment from the Society of Friends;<sup>26</sup> in Dickinson's it may well have been the stumbling block which prevented him from applying for membership.

Yet in every phase of Dickinson's life, as in Logan's, there was something of the Quaker devotion to peace—the horror of violence, the longing for conciliation, the faith in negotiation, the persistent, undiscourageable effort to find common ground with enemies. Dickinson's attitude in the critical years of 1775 and 1776 is well known—his consistent (and to warmer-blooded patriots most annoying) efforts for reconciliation with Britain months after the battle of Lexington had been fought, his principled opposition to independence, which cost him nearly all his political prestige. He was not neutral in this crisis as the Quakers tried to be, but he was seeking with them some middle ground. Naturally they looked to him for leadership,<sup>27</sup> and naturally, when the lines were drawn, he suffered something of the same unpopularity, the same obloquy from both sides that fell upon them.

<sup>25</sup> See Dickinson to George Logan, February 11, 1803, Deborah Norris Logan, *Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton*, ed. Frances A. Logan (Philadelphia, 1899), pp. 146–47.

<sup>26</sup> Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia*, pp. 106–108, 114.

<sup>27</sup> "The Quakers courted and seemed to depend upon him," wrote Charles Thomson, speaking of the summer of 1774. Quoted in Stillé, p. 342. A concise statement of Dickinson's position as the crisis neared is found in a letter which he wrote in January 1775 to Patience Wright, an English Quakeress: "For my part, I can only say, there are two points on either of which I shall esteem it my duty, when called upon, to lay down my Life. First, to defend the Liberties of my Country against their meditated Destruction. Secondly, To preserve the Dependence of those Colonies on their Mother Country." *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, XX (1923), 95.



John Adams, for the extreme Whigs, pilloried him as "a certain great fortune and piddling genius" who had "given a silly cast to our whole doings" by insisting on further petitions to George III after hostilities had broken out;<sup>28</sup> and the Tories castigated him for his "infatuation" in favoring resistance if the petitions should fail.<sup>29</sup> It may have been some consolation to Dickinson to know that Quakers, as advocates of both peace and liberty, have always found themselves in this unhappy position when their countrymen have decided that liberty can be purchased only at the cost of peace.

Dickinson's Quaker-like zeal for peace and reconciliation manifested itself again, twenty years later, when the young American nation found itself teetering on the brink of another war—a war which he conceived to be as unjustified as it was unnecessary. The circumstances of our quasi-war with France—the term "cold war" had not yet been invented—were curiously similar in at least their superficial aspects to those of the East-West struggle of our own time. The United States found itself in 1797 at odds with a former ally—a nation which, having passed through a social revolution, was now in an aggressively expansionist mood. Already it had set up a ring of satellites around it and there were those in America who were, or professed to be, convinced that the United States was in mortal danger. Foreign agents, they insisted, were already at work infiltrating the opposition party, waiting their chance to deal a death blow to our republican institutions. To many, the XYZ Affair appeared to demonstrate that diplomacy was powerless to halt the drift towards war. The country was hag-ridden by fear—fear of at-

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<sup>28</sup> To James Warren, July 24, 1775, *Works of John Adams*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston, 1856), I, 179.

<sup>29</sup> Letter quoted in Charles H. Lincoln, *The Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1901), pp. 202-203.



tack from without, of conspiracy within. While the country's defenses were built up, laws were passed under the guise of "internal security legislation" to exclude foreigners and curb the freedom of political expression. Both peace and freedom were in jeopardy in the United States between 1796 and 1798—as much from the policies of the administration as from any objective threat from outside.<sup>30</sup>

Early in this crisis John Dickinson spoke out from his retirement in Wilmington, risking whatever popular standing he had acquired as an elder statesman, in order to inject a note of sanity and moderation into the excited atmosphere of public affairs. He published a series of letters, signed "Fabius," in which he argued calmly and cogently for a policy of peace, based on continued friendship with France. This was the second series of letters he had published under the pseudonym "Fabius." The first, written in 1787, in support of the federal Constitution, had served to associate him in the public mind with the Federalist party. By coming out for peace with France ten years later, he identified himself with the anti-Federalist party—the party of Thomas Jefferson, the Democratic-Republicans, as they called themselves, or the American Jacobins, as their opponents chose to call them.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> There is a growing literature on the domestic phases of the quasi-war with France. See, for example, James Morton Smith, "Background for Repression: America's Half-War with France and the Internal Security Legislation of 1798," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XVIII (1954), 37–58; John C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom: The Alien and Sedition Acts* (Boston, 1951); Marshall Smelser, "The Jacobin Phrenzy: Federalism and the Menace of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," *Review of Politics*, XIII (1951), 457–82.

<sup>31</sup> The following year, when the war scare was at its peak, when hostilities had actually occurred on the high seas, he published another, even bolder piece in which he saluted the French Revolution as a triumph for "Freedom's cause" and once more warned of the "fatal consequences of our being involved in war with France." See William G. Soler, "A Reattribution: John Dickinson's Authorship of the Pamphlet 'A Caution,' 1798," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXVII (1953), 24–31.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

This brings me to the point which has puzzled every writer on John Dickinson. Why should a "conservative," an aristocrat, a man of vast wealth and high social standing, a defender of the Constitution in 1787, a supporter of the Washington administration, suddenly turn around at the advanced age of sixty-five and associate himself with "radicals," with democrats and Jacobins? His biographer, Charles J. Stillé, confessed himself utterly unable to explain "the causes which changed the views of a man who had been regarded during his whole previous life as a conservative of the conservatives, and led him to support those who advocated the popular, almost revolutionary doctrines . . . held by the anti-Federalists." By adopting those views, Stillé thought, Dickinson "seemed to disavow all the principles which had up to that time formed the basis of his political life."<sup>32</sup> V. L. Parrington admitted the same puzzlement thirty-five years later: he spoke of the "curious inconsistency that marked Dickinson's last years," the "strange shift" for which there seemed to be no logical explanation.<sup>33</sup> No one has so far solved the riddle: how could so thorough a "conservative" become a "radical" in his old age?

### IV

The clue can be found if we simply look at the political behavior of the Philadelphia Friends and rid our minds of certain stubborn stereotypes. Insofar as the Quakers participated in politics as voters, their desire for social stability led them, as we have seen, to support the Constitution and the new government of President Washington. But there is evidence that many of them deserted the Federalists in the election of 1796; fearful that John Adams would take the country into war, they voted for Jeffer-

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<sup>32</sup> *Life and Times*, pp. 279, 285.

<sup>33</sup> *Main Currents in American Thought* (New York, 1927-30), I, 230.



son.<sup>34</sup> And early in 1798, as the policies of President Adams seemed to be justifying their worst fears, old James Pemberton and three other prominent Quakers sent a petition to Congress to strengthen the hands of the few Jeffersonians who were valiantly trying to stem the drift toward war.<sup>35</sup> They were simply responding to their natural instincts, these Quakers, with no sense that they were indulging in inconsistent political behavior.

If we are to understand why they were not inconsistent, and why John Dickinson was not inconsistent in taking a similar course, we must disabuse our minds of the popular concepts of "radical" and "conservative," concepts that have tyrannized too long over our thinking and have confused our understanding of American political history. For years we have been trying to explain American politics in those seductively simple terms.<sup>36</sup> Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton have conventionally been regarded as the tutelary geniuses presiding over the two schools of political thought. Accepting without question these mutually exclusive categories of "radical," "conservative," we have tried to force every American political figure into one or the other of these molds. Dickinson, we say, was a conservative. Was he not a man of property? Did he not oppose independence in 1776? Did he not write in support of the Constitution in 1787? Throughout his career did he not appeal habitually to his-

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<sup>34</sup> See letter of Fisher Ames to Christopher Gore, December 3, 1796, *Works of Fisher Ames*, ed. Seth Ames (Boston, 1854), I, 206.

<sup>35</sup> MS memorial signed by James Pemberton, Amos Yarnall, John Eliot, and Owen Biddle, March 23, 1798, copy in Logan Papers, V, 14, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>36</sup> The essay on "Radicalism and Conservatism" in Arthur M. Schlesinger's influential *New Viewpoints in American History* (New York, 1922), pp. 103-25, probably did something to fix this simplistic pattern of analysis in American historical thinking. Vernon L. Parrington's characteristic trick of opposing a Roger Williams to a John Winthrop, a John Wise to a Cotton Mather, a Thomas Jefferson to an Alexander Hamilton throughout his *Main Currents in American Thought* undoubtedly encouraged this habit of dichotomizing our political history.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

tory and legal precedent rather than to natural law and natural rights? How, after such a typically conservative course, could he become a Jeffersonian, a radical? With Stillé and Parrington, so long as we accept these arbitrary categories, we are obliged to throw up our hands and confess ourselves baffled.

But do we have to force our thinking into these rigid, artificial categories? Do they actually explain American political history? Have we, in fact, had either a genuinely conservative or a genuinely radical tradition in this country? A number of writers in recent years have suggested that we have had neither.<sup>37</sup> Where, on the one hand, is our American Burke, our Metternich? And where, on the other hand, is our Marx or our Robespierre? Was Abraham Lincoln a conservative or a radical? And how shall we characterize Theodore Roosevelt? Or, for that matter, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who once seemed such a wild-eyed revolutionary to some Americans but who now appears increasingly in history books as a conservative, or at most as the moderate apostle of a middle way? Finally, to come no closer than the Presidential campaign of 1952, can we label Mr. Eisenhower a conservative or Mr. Stevenson a radical?

The trouble we have in answering these questions suggests the conclusion that the major figures in our political tradition have actually agreed over a wider area than they have disagreed, that the main stream of our politics has in fact been a single stream, which can be called, perhaps, a moderate liberalism. If this conclusion is valid, then clearly the labels "radical" and "conservative" confuse and obscure more than they illuminate, and we must seek understanding by a more flexible and subtle analysis, by studying our political leaders in relation to their actual histori-

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<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York, 1948) and Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York, 1955).



cal setting rather than trying to fit them into an arbitrary preconceived scheme.

Just here, I suggest, lies the importance of seeing John Dickinson against his Quaker background. The aristocratic Quakers of his time were men of property. They had little use for social turbulence or sudden, drastic change. By temperament, by religious training and conviction, they were moderate, cautious, conciliatory, peaceable. At the same time, they were as devoted to liberty—religious liberty, political liberty, economic liberty—as any group of individuals in the eighteenth-century world. And above all they were humanitarians—pioneers in working for social changes that would give wider scope and fuller dignity to the human spirit. But they drew the line at violence and worked ceaselessly for reconciliation, for peaceful accommodation between individuals, groups, and nations. Unquestionably John Dickinson, as a man of wealth, shared their desire for stability and social calm. Unquestionably, too, he shared their devotion to liberty and their generous concern for humanity. And though he was no absolute pacifist, he too was committed to an attitude of patient conciliation, moderation, and peaceableness.

He was enough of a Quaker, as we have seen, to shrink from violence in 1776, though not enough to refuse military service in defense of his country. After the Revolution, as before, he longed for stability and order. Like most of the Friends, he supported the Constitution and the first Federalist administration, meanwhile giving expression to his humanitarian impulses through private benevolence and efforts to end slavery. But when he saw the Federalists bringing in drastic innovations—banks, funding systems, schemes for manufactures—which threatened to change the face of the United States, when he saw them passing anti-libertarian laws like the Alien and Sedition Acts and recklessly

courting war with France, what more natural than that he should cross over, give his support to Jefferson and the anti-Federalists who were committed to preserving the old agrarian America and who seemed sympathetic with his Quaker ideals of liberty, humanity, and peace? This was precisely the pattern of George Logan's political career,<sup>38</sup> and Logan, like Dickinson, stood on the fringes of the Society of Friends.

If we look at Dickinson's life in this perspective, our vision unclouded by the confusing concepts of "radical" and "conservative," the inconsistencies vanish in a larger consistency, and his political life appears an integrated, a harmonious whole. This, I suggest, is the proper perspective in which to see John Dickinson's career—the perspective of the Quaker tradition which he shared, which he could not help sharing, even though, strictly speaking, he was not a Friend.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia*, chaps. VI–VII.



## JAMES WILSON AND THE ERA OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION\*



*Charles Page Smith*

DICKINSON College in the town of Carlisle is certainly one of the most suitable places in the country to talk about that remarkable Scotsman, James Wilson. In any audience of this size almost anywhere else than in Carlisle I would be surprised to find a half dozen people who even knew the name of James Wilson, and perhaps none who were aware of the nature of his contributions to this republic. Here you undoubtedly know him well.

It was to Carlisle that James Wilson brought his bride. Here he made his start as a young frontier lawyer, and from here he went as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress. Mr. Lyman Butterfield, in the first of these lectures delivered in 1947, told in delightful fashion the story of Benjamin Rush and the beginning of John and Mary's College. As a close friend of Rush, Wilson drew up the first charter of this college, Rush's "dear, petulant brat,"<sup>1</sup> and Wilson and John Montgomery abandoned their duties in Continental Congress to steer the college's charter

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\* Dr. Smith, Professor of History at the University of California, Los Angeles, is the author of a biography of James Wilson, published this year. The lecture was delivered on December 5, 1952.

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Rush to John Montgomery, Philadelphia, February 17, 1787, *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, edited by Lyman H. Butterfield (Princeton, 1951), 412.

through the Pennsylvania Assembly. Here in Carlisle there are many reminders of Jimmy de Caladonia, as his enemies often called him. You have the James Wilson Hotel on the site of his house. You may go to the First Presbyterian Church that James Wilson attended, and where in 1774 he was elected by his townspeople as a delegate to the Provincial Conference in Philadelphia. If you are hardhearted enough you may even impose, as I did, on the apparently inexhaustible patience of your Prothonotary, Mr. Robert Messic. Through his good offices you may delve into the dockets of the Cumberland County Court of Common Pleas and see James Wilson's name listed more and more frequently in each session of the court as his law practice grew. You can poke through dusty tax records and piece out the story of his growing prosperity; how he bought a cow for Rachel, his new bride, and two saddle horses for himself to ride the circuits of the adjacent county courts; how he gradually added to his land holdings in Cumberland County. Indeed, I understand that until a few years ago his odd desk, now in the Monmouth County Historical Society in Freehold, N.J., stood in the college library.

Finally, tracing the relationship of James Wilson to the town of Carlisle, we might switch our attention to the year 1788. By then Wilson had moved to Philadelphia, where as the acknowledged leader of the Federalist forces of the state, he had helped to frame the federal Constitution, and had directed the fight to secure Pennsylvania's ratification of the Constitution.

In the winter of 1787-88, a group of Federalists in Carlisle met in the town square to celebrate the ratification of the federal Constitution. Before they had a chance to carry through their ceremony, a mob of angry radicals set on them with clubs and barrel staves and drove them to cover. The next day effigies of Wilson, "James de Caladonia," and Chief Justice McKean were



carried through the town and then "with indignation suitable to the opinion [the people] entertained of men who could endeavor to undermine the liberties of their country" consigned to a funeral pyre burning in the square.<sup>2</sup>

When one of the radicals wrote an account of the riot to the friendly *Independent Gazetteer*, it included this very significant sentence: "I assure you it was laughable to see lawyers, doctors, colonels, captains, etc., etc., leave the scene of rejoicing in such haste, and run, some one way and some another."<sup>3</sup> Real bitterness against a particular class—the leading citizens of the town—this was Carlisle in 1788.

I would like to persuade you to concentrate then on two highly dramatic incidents in Carlisle's history: the election of Wilson, Magaw, and Irvine as delegates to the Provincial Conference of 1774, and the burning in effigy of the town's most distinguished citizen fourteen years later. What had James Wilson done in a period of ten years or so to make him the object of this symbolic violence by the inhabitants of a town that had not long before been proud to honor him? I would like to examine these two episodes and see what they will reveal to us of the life and temper of Cumberland County in the era of the American Revolution. I would like to suggest that what was happening in Carlisle reflected in some degree what was happening in many of the other counties of Pennsylvania, especially the western counties, and if we might enlarge the perspective somewhat, what was indeed happening in many of the other states of the new union. Then, if I might tax your imaginations even more, I would ask you to consider whether these two episodes that took place in Carlisle in the latter years of the eighteenth century might not serve as a

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<sup>2</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, February 7, 1788.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

kind of touchstone to conflicts and tensions that survive to our own time.

In 1774 James Wilson was thirty-two years old. He had arrived in the American colonies nine years before, taught at the College of Philadelphia, studied law under John Dickinson, and began his practice in Reading. In 1770 John Armstrong, a member of Carlisle's ruling oligarchy, an Indian fighter, a judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and a prosperous farmer lured Wilson to Carlisle. Armstrong and the small group of lawyers who ran the affairs of Carlisle with a firm and just hand, took Wilson at once into their ranks. Included in the ruling group were men like William Thompson, John Montgomery, Robert Magaw, Ephraim Blaine, George Stevenson, and Dr. William Irvine. These men were closely allied with the Proprietary party; they were adherents of the Proprietary cause against the Philadelphia Quakers and most of them were officeholders under the Penns. They had jobs as surveyors, sheriffs, prothonotaries, and court clerks. They got extra grants of land and special favors from the Penns, and through them and men like them, the frontier community was kept friendly and subservient to the Proprietary party. They exercised authority in a kind of custodianship, and through their alliance with the Proprietary forces, they controlled patronage. They also administered justice and though they observed the forms of a democratic system, they in truth exercised power by default, or perhaps we might say better as trustees of the inhabitants of Cumberland County.<sup>4</sup> When the townspeople of Carlisle gathered on the famous occasion in July, 1774, to appoint delegates to the Provincial Conference to represent Cumberland County, it was rather as though a group of the leading

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion, Charles Page Smith, *James Wilson, Founding Father, 1742-1798* (Chapel Hill, 1956), 44-50.



citizens of Carlisle were to assemble today on the same spot, men like Judge Shughart, Judge Biddle, President Edel and Mr. Flower—these men to meet at the First Presbyterian Church and undertake to elect a state senator and several representatives to the Pennsylvania Assembly from Cumberland County. Such action would certainly bring prompt and loud outcries, however respected and admired the individuals who made up the meeting might be.

Well, this, I suggest, was substantially what happened in Carlisle in 1774, with this important difference—that it never occurred to anyone to protest. The procedure seemed a perfectly normal one. Indeed, at the moment, it was perhaps the only possible one.

James Wilson, along with Robert Magaw and Dr. Irvine, was elected by his fellow citizens as a delegate to the Provincial Conference and with his companions he rode off to Philadelphia to meet in Carpenters' Hall with delegates from neighboring counties elected in much the same manner.

The departure of Wilson and his friends was symbolic as well as actual. They were soon followed by most of the other members of the town's oligarchy. When they left Carlisle to enter on the larger stage of continental affairs, they left a power vacuum, as the political scientists might call it, behind them. In removing themselves, they very largely removed the ruling class in Cumberland County, and into their vacated seats stepped a new type of politician with different interests, different viewpoints, different loyalties. Wilson and his friends were replaced by a group of more or less indigenous frontier politicians who had no entangling alliances with the Proprietors and who, since they could not expect political preferment through the established channels, must seek for a source of power elsewhere. This they found by



appealing to the special interests of the frontier in opposition to other sections and strata of provincial society.

Of the tangled politics of the province, and later the state of Pennsylvania, only a few things can be said. The Pennsylvania leaders—Whigs they called themselves—who were the radicals in 1774, became moderates in 1775 and conservatives in 1776, both as regards colonial independence and the state government. In part this is the story of every revolutionary movement. We go in Pennsylvania from Joseph Galloway to John Dickinson, then to James Wilson, and finally to Timothy Matlack. But only part of this movement from right to left can be accounted for on the grounds of the growing acceleration of revolutionary change. The American Revolution was intensely conservative in many ways. It did not, as did its French successor, devour its own children. Perhaps the closest it came was when a mob of angry militia attacked the James Wilson's house on Arch and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia with murderous intent. Quite as important as the law of revolutionary acceleration in isolating Wilson and the moderate Whigs, was the fact that the frontier politicians who replaced the old ruling group in the western counties attacked the moderate Whigs on their weakest side—their loyalty to the Proprietors and their consequent reluctance to face the possibility of independence. Seeing the moderates hold back, the radical westerners rushed in and made the cause of independence their own. By doing this they were able to enlist the support of all those delegates in Continental Congress who were impatient for independence. Thus, with their Congressional allies, they maneuvered the moderate Whigs into a position where independence would mean the dissolution of the existing charter government of Pennsylvania and pave the way for the radicals to take over the administration of the state. And this is what happened. Wilson



and the moderates were caught between the ultra-conservative Quaker and Proprietary group on one hand and the pressing demands of the radicals on the other. They chose to oppose independence up to the last moment in the hope that a way might be found to achieve independence without surrendering the "wise laws of our charter government,"<sup>5</sup> and placing the province in a state of anarchy.

Independence did indeed mean the overthrow of the old Proprietary government. The radicals led by George Bryan, Timothy Matlack, and James Cannon took control and framed the Constitution of 1776. The enemies of the new Constitution, led by Wilson, charged that its main purpose was to disenfranchise all those who were opposed to it, and indeed the new frame of government was never really voted on and properly ratified. But then revolutions are not renowned for even-handed justice.

The Constitution of 1776 became the bulwark of radical power. It was the instrument by which the westerners maintained themselves in office throughout the years of the Revolution. Through it the power of the eastern oligarchy was broken. The Easterners never really regained power again except for brief interludes. In the fight of the moderate Whigs against the Constitution of 1776, Wilson was the leader, and as the issues were sharpened the major political division in Pennsylvania became the classic one. On the one side were the Westerners and urban radicals who wished a loose confederacy with a minimum of central authority, with cheap money, legislative dominance, an elected judiciary; on the other were the Federalists, who stood for sound finance, a strong national government, and an independent judiciary.

As Wilson carried on the fight against the Constitution of

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Force, *Archives*, 4th ser., III, 1793.

1776 with every weapon in his political armory, he aroused the increasing hostility of the friends of that document. He was ousted from Continental Congress in 1777, and the following year his defense of Tories, primarily the two Quakers, John Roberts and Abraham Carlisle, so inflamed popular prejudice against him that the Fort Wilson riot ensued. When Wilson and his friends emerged from the "Fort" after the battle, four men were dead and fourteen wounded.<sup>6</sup>

Wilson's first real triumph in his long battle for Federalist principles came with the framing of the federal Constitution. The radicals were quick to point out that six out of the eight Pennsylvania delegates to the federal Convention were "the inveterate enemies of our inestimable constitution, and the principal figures of the faction that for ten years past have kept the people in continual alarm for their liberties. . . . These conspirators," the radicals declared, "emboldened by the sanction of the august name of a *Washington* . . . have presumed to overleap the usual gradation to absolute power and have attempted to seize at once upon the supremacy of absolute dominion."<sup>7</sup>

Wilson and James Madison were the principal figures in the federal Convention. For proof of this statement, I refer you to the record of the debates themselves. Madison's role is well known; Wilson's, equally important, much less so. In the convention, Wilson fought for direct election of both houses, direct election of the president, an enlightened western policy and a national judiciary. He then steered the Constitution through the Pennsylvania ratifying convention, over the bitter last-ditch opposition of the radicals.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See John P. Selsam, *The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776: A Study in Revolutionary Democracy* (Philadelphia, 1936) for the most complete account of this chapter in Pennsylvania history.

<sup>7</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, January 8, 1788.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *James Wilson*, 262-280.



The radicals saw the federal Constitution as a prelude to the revision of their own state constitution, and the first step in the Easterners' return to power.

Defeated in the convention, the radicals carried on the fight from the western counties. The burning of the figure of Jimmy de Caladonia in the Carlisle town square in 1788 was a part of this campaign directed at preventing the final adoption of the federal Constitution. Soon after the riot a group of Carlisle radicals wrote to the *Independent Gazetteer* as follows: "If the lazy and great wish to ride, they may lay it down as an indubitable . . . axiom that the people of America will make a very refractory and restive hackney. . . . The people of America understand their rights better than, by adopting such a constitution, to rivet the fetters of slavery; or to sacrifice their liberty at the shrine of aristocracy. . . ." Those who supported the Constitution, the writers continued, "will be spurned and execrated by the succeeding generations as the pillars of slavery, tyranny and despotism."<sup>9</sup>

This, in very brief outline, is the story behind the dramatic happenings in the Carlisle square in 1788. When all the bitter invective has been excised from this remarkable chapter in Pennsylvania history—a story with counterparts in almost every other state and in other western counties—one fact emerges very clearly and vividly. In 1788 the citizens of Cumberland County had a new concept of government and of the functions of power. The educated, well-born, or well-to-do were no longer to be the custodians of power exercised in the name of the many. The many were now ready to exercise power in their own right, and their exercise of it was colored and distorted by the memory of indignities, real or fancied, that they had suffered at the hands of those who formerly held power.

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<sup>9</sup> *Independent Gazetteer*, January 9, 1788.

It seems fairly safe to say that the radical opposition to the new federal Constitution was wrong, wrong in its narrowness and in its fears, wrong in fact and in theory. The country needed the Constitution and it soon proved itself much more than an instrument of class domination. But if the radicals were wrong in fact, they may have been right in spirit, not in their provincialism and bigotry, but in their new-found and aggressively asserted independence, and in their devotion to what were in their view egalitarian ideals. Their suspicion of the forms of power, and their jealous concern for their own liberties remained constants in American democracy. The responsible use of power is only learned by the exercise of power. The riots of 1788 marked the emergence of new political alignments in a new nation. In a few years the riot itself was largely forgotten. Pennsylvania became predominately a state of Jeffersonian Republicans. The old animosities were buried or gave way to new ones. In a remarkably short time the federal Constitution took on an aura of sanctity, and the wounds of class conflict were largely healed. But the clash that occurred here in 1788 had repercussions that sound down to the present day.

For the greater part of the last century, the tendency of historians was to elevate the Founding Fathers of the Republic into demigods. From this perspective their opponents seemed thoroughly reprehensible characters, not only wrong in fact, but in principle. The declarations and the actions of the radicals were viewed most unsympathetically by historians who were inclined to share many of the prejudices of the Founders themselves.

All this changed, however, as all things must. Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century, a new school of historians emerged who, imbued with the ideals of liberal humanitarianism and armed with Marxian criticism, turned the nineteenth-



century picture upside down. The Founders now were cast in the role of villains, and their opponents, the radicals, emerged as heroes, the exemplars of the real American democratic tradition. The anguished cries of "aristocratic cabal" uttered by William Findley, John Smilie, and Robert Whitehill in 1787 and 1788 now fell on sympathetic ears. (It is remarkable the way we suddenly hear across generations, words that have not been heard for many years.) In any event, the radicals were rehabilitated. The Carlisle riot, viewed in this new light, was seen as a rather inspiring example of democratic aspiration directed against aristocratic pretensions.

The era from 1776 to 1789 was seen by historians of this school as primarily a social and economic upheaval in which the democratic aspirations of the people were thwarted by self-interested lawyers and property holders. J. Allen Smith was one of the first to view the constitution in this light, as a counter-revolution, designed to curtail democracy. The adoption of the federal Constitution was, to him, the "triumph of a skillfully directed reactionary movement."<sup>10</sup> "The *form* of democracy" was given to the Constitution by the self-interested framers in order that the people might more readily accept the document. Parrington furthered this interpretation and of course Charles Beard capped it with his economic interpretation of the Constitution. Beard's book rounded off the conspiracy theory by implying that the political attitudes of the Founders were based primarily on their holdings of public securities. After Beard a number of Marxian historians like Gustavus Myers and Louis Hacker rushed forward to reinforce the Beardesian criticism and indeed to push his analysis to extremes from which Beard himself recoiled. Merrill Jensen, to bring the story down almost to the present, made his

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in *The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution* edited by Earl Latham, Heath New History Series (Boston, 1949), 34.

book on the Articles of Confederation a kind of modern appendix to the Beard thesis and thus gave new life to that interpretation.

Today the Beardesian picture, although it is frequently opposed, is the dominant one. It is in our textbooks, in our history courses, high school and college, and to some degree in our minds. A book published just last month for example—a collection of significant documents in American history—provides a case in point. "In all likelihood," writes the editor in his introduction, "the majority of Americans in 1785 were well-satisfied with a government [the Articles of Confederation] that had developed a liberal and far-sighted land policy and had faithfully administered its responsibilities without at all enroaching upon the liberties of the people."<sup>11</sup> The implication here is of course that the government under the Articles was functioning smoothly and was adequate for the administration of the affairs of the United States. From this it follows that the Framers of the Constitution wished to substitute for the liberal and efficient government a system essentially repressive and authoritarian—a class document.

Max Lerner attacked this position a few years ago in these words, "We are all too ready to pose an antithesis between the Constitution as such and the democratic impulse, an antithesis that does not exist. We have been led," says Lerner, "into this error partly by the excellent work of Charles Beard and his school in proving that the Constitution represented the property interests of the minority."<sup>12</sup>

It is indeed on the basis of the Beardesian approach that the greater part of a whole generation of American historians have

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<sup>11</sup> Richard D. Heffner, *A Documentary History of the United States* (Mentor Books, 1952), 19.

<sup>12</sup> "Minority Rule and the Constitutional Tradition," in *The Constitution Reconsidered*, edited by Conyers Read, (New York, 1938), 201.



evaluated the American Revolution. The American counterparts of the English Whig historians have chosen to write our history as though it began with Thomas Jefferson and culminated with the New Deal. Of late more deference has been shown to the motives of the Founding Fathers, but many historians, fortified by modern psychology, have suggested that the federal Constitution was simply the subconscious rationalization of a propertied ruling class, and as such served, in the last analysis, to delay the quest for social justice.

The proponents of the Founding Fathers are, today, coming back into the ascendancy. It is a fact, however, that anyone writing admiringly about a prominent Federalist is apt to be slightly apologetic, or stridently defiant. He is at least on the defensive. And the thought may haunt us that even if we avowedly Federalist sympathies do carry the field for the moment, aided by a growing conservatism in the nation as a whole, we will have to spend our declining years watching our forces, bowed by age and burdened with outmoded ideas, routed by new radical champions who will again banish our heroes to an historical limbo.

Although I believe that throughout history we shall always have with us the conservative and the liberal mentality, each having its moment of domination and each making, or having the capacity to make, a vital contribution to man's social and political life, I am presumptuous enough to hope that the conflict between Federalist and radical that took place in the Carlisle town square in 1788 can be laid to rest and with it the question of the Federalist contribution to American history. This cannot, I am sure, be done by arguing that one side is purer, or better, or more right, or more one hundred percent American than the other, but only by placing both sides in the long perspective of

history and giving each its proper place in the American political tradition.

I hope to achieve this goal of making peace between these ancient adversaries by re-examining the character and the meaning of the American Revolution itself, for it is from this great event that our history as a nation begins.

In the historical event that we refer to as the American Revolution, there were represented, actually, three separate revolutions in ways of viewing traditional social and political relationships. The American Revolution involved a social, a political, and a legal revolution. The coincidence by which these three revolutions entangled their destinies in the years from 1776 to 1787 has caused confusion in the minds of historians ever since. It seems to me that a proper assessment of the nature of the American Revolution requires that the threads of these three revolutions be untangled.

One of these revolutions in traditional attitudes was a social revolution which began in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's great document had implications which even the author was unaware of. It set the course for American liberal democracy in the years ahead. The realization of many of the social ideals adumbrated in the Declaration came in 1932 with the New Deal. The principles of the New Deal were by no means unrelated to the aspirations, as yet largely inchoate and unformed, that lay behind the Carlisle riot of 1788. But it was one of the ironies of our history that the New Deal could only achieve its aim of placing the welfare of all the people above the advantage of special interests through the effective force of a strong national government.

The political revolution had a two-fold nature: it was, of course, most obviously, a revolt against the rule of Great Britain,



an armed rebellion, directed at first toward the redress of specific grievances and finally to independence. But equally important the era of the American Revolution saw the emergence of the concept of Federal Union. This was, to the American states of the late eighteenth century, a truly revolutionary concept. As the English historian W. H. V. Reade has expressed it, "No form of society can be genuinely new unless it embodies an idea beyond the capacity of the old."<sup>13</sup> This the Federalists, led by Wilson, Madison, and Hamilton achieved. Indeed the concept of Federal Union was so revolutionary that the country as a whole never came to accept the idea of an indissoluble union until 1865. The revolution in political thinking that began in 1787 with the federal Constitution was not consummated until the Civil War settled the issue once and for all.

The legal revolution, to which I have already alluded, began, by my interpretation, in 1630 and culminated in 1787. The nature of the social and political revolutions is, I am sure, more or less familiar to you. The concept of a legal revolution, beginning early in the seventeenth century and ending in the latter part of the eighteenth century, is perhaps more novel, and I would like, therefore, to concentrate on it for a few moments.

Sixteenth-century England saw the rise of the Puritans as a religious sect and as a powerful group of disputants who challenged the existing civil and ecclesiastical authority in the name of Calvinism. One of the most serious attacks of the Puritans was directed against English law. If, as the Puritans claimed, all the law needed for a righteous and ordered social life could be found in the Old Testament with glosses from the New, the ancient, magnificent, carefully accumulated body of English law was

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<sup>13</sup> "Political Theory to c. 1300," in *Cambridge Medieval History* (London, 1929), VI, 603.

obsolete. It was this threat which inspired the pens of the Anglican apologists Whitgift and Hooker who were forced by the Puritan heresy to revive medieval doctrines of natural law in support of ecclesiastical polity and common law.

When the Puritans migrated to America, one of their principal aims was to erect a Bible Commonwealth, rejecting English law and social organization for that inspired and, as far as possible, immediately derived from the Old Testament.

They could not, of course, succeed. From the very first they brought with them certain traditional ways of viewing personal relationships that made inevitable the gradual encroachment of common law concepts and common law practice. Although the experiment of the Bible Commonwealth failed, as the judicious Hooker might have predicted, the attitude of opposition to English law which the Puritans carried with them prevailed as the dominant pattern throughout all the colonies. Even in those colonies that were by no means Puritan in their orientation, the same resistance was evident. Roscoe Pound, Charles Warren, and Robert Brandon Morris have dealt at length with this fact. Paul Reinsch, in particular, traces, colony by colony, the reaction against English common law. Colonial America thus was anti-legal or alegal well into the eighteenth century. Lawyers were looked down upon, where there were any, and had indeed less status than honest artisans. They were, in the eyes of most colonists, a pariah caste.

However, the increasing complexity of colonial society forced the gradual acceptance of common law and by the middle of the eighteenth century colonial America was ready for a great legal renaissance. A number of events conspired to abet this flowering. Chief, perhaps, was the conflict with Great Britain and the fact that it presented itself in legal and constitutional terms.



America thus received a powerful impetus to supplement the practical growth of native law with vast accumulations of legal theory and history. The best and most creative minds in the country were drawn into law. The problems of law in all their broadest implications became the preoccupation of the lawyers. In their task of formulating a theory of law in relation to American society, the Revolution was both an impediment and a necessary condition. The lawyers chafed uneasily under the inept Articles of Confederation and greeted the Federal Convention with joy as providing an opportunity to place the new nation clearly under law. The federal Constitution was a great many things beside, but it was also the culmination of the legal revolution which began in America in 1630. It was the triumph of law and of an abstract theory of the relation of the state to law that had its origin in the theories of the medieval schoolmen.

With the completion of the Constitution, the creative work of the Federalist lawyers was largely over. Their final energies were spent in Marshall, Story, and Kent, who conjoined to place the state clearly within and under law, and with Daniel Webster, who carried on the battle to make the ideal of union a reality.

Seen in this perspective the Framers appear, not as the dead hands of reaction, laid upon the social aspirations of the Revolution, but as completers of one of the three revolutions in traditional relationships which mingled their destinies in the years from 1776 to 1787. The type of constitutional government created by the Federalists—a government under law—offers security, stability, and opportunity for personal and social development, but its besetting danger is that of inflexibility. This inflexibility can become repressive and authoritarian. Thus we need the continual thrust of radical democratic aspiration to

crack open the hardening cake of custom and thereby permit new growth and development.

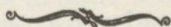
The creative energies manifested by the Federalists passed quickly to the champions of liberal democracy who at the very start of their crusade demonstrated their lack of understanding of the Framers' concept of law and the state when, under Jefferson's direction, they attempted to level the Supreme Court in its early years.

The deep and enduring cleavage between these two traditions was demonstrated anew in 1932 when the social revolution of Franklin Roosevelt came into its own and immediately struck again at the integrity of the judiciary.

If this schematic approach to the American Revolution has any value, it is that, by lifting the events of 1787-88 above the level of both Whig and Tory history, it makes it possible to assess the Revolution more fairly. It reveals the work of men like James Wilson, not primarily as a defense of their own property interests or a plot against popular liberties, but as the creation of a new political form, a Federal Union, and as the imposition of a rule of law in American society. It recognizes at the same time the equally important quite different orientation of those who sought social justice through the realization of the ideals contained in the Declaration of Independence.



## AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE MIGRATIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA



*Brooke Hindle*

**Y**EARS ago one of America's greatest historians summed up the still prevalent view regarding the exodus of the Tories of our Revolution. "America thus lost," he said, "the services of many men of ability, of high integrity, and of genuine culture; clergymen and scholars, landowners and merchants of substantial estate, men learned in law, high officials of proven experience in politics and administration. The great achievements in history have their price; and American independence was won only by the sacrifice of much that was best in colonial society."<sup>1</sup> The basic truth of this interpretation is so manifest that it has served to exaggerate the significance of the emigration and to obscure totally the migration which ran in the other direction. It is easy to study the emigrants, easy to assign their departure to a single cause, and easy to assume that their defection was a more serious loss to American culture than it was. On the other hand, the heterogeneous group of contemporary immigrants—unsettled by the ferment of the times and impelled to come to America for a

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\* Dr. Hindle is Professor of History at New York University. The lecture was delivered on February 16, 1951.

<sup>1</sup> Carl Becker, *The Beginnings of the American People* (Boston, 1915), 272.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

variety of reasons—is more difficult to study. The possibility that the men who came to America during the Revolutionary era might have had more to give to American culture than the loyalists took away with them has seldom been pursued.

It must always demand a certain amount of humor to call for special attention to immigration in a country built by immigrants. Yet there is no reliable record of the number of immigrants during the Revolutionary era, and lacking statistics, the movement has often been minimized.<sup>2</sup> But, even accepting a bleak quantitative picture, this immigration assumes great importance when the individuals who entered the country are examined and the selective influence of the Revolution is discerned. Similarly, it is necessary to consider who the actual emigrants were. The naked statistics of loyalist emigration—even if they were accurate—would have little meaning.

Men loyal to the Crown began to desert our shores very early with a significant exodus from Massachusetts in 1775. As the frenzy spread, mobs and revolutionary committees caused the stream of refugees to swell, fed by tributaries from each of the colonies. The British Army further stimulated the process by its operations. One after another, the great cities of America were occupied as the British vainly searched for the land of the "good Tory." Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Newport, and—late in the war—Charleston, were successively occupied. Everywhere the British went they found loyal men and true, and limners were kept busy painting "The King's Arms" on tavern signs which had

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<sup>2</sup> British Consul Phineas Bond estimated that even as late as 1789, United States population suffered from wartime emigration to such an extent that it had not recovered the level of 1775. This has always been considered a partisan exaggeration, but recently, Merrill Jensen has pictured a postwar tide of immigration of a magnitude that completely contravenes Bond's assertion. Cf. "Letters of Phineas Bond," *American Historical Review*, I (1889), 648 and Merrill Jensen, *The New Nation* (New York, 1950), 111, 122-125.



recently displayed the face of some American general. But usually the army found it expedient to withdraw after a time, and always the patriots reestablished their authority in the region as soon as the British military power had been removed. As a consequence, the leading loyalists, after a period of collaboration, usually found it advisable to retire with the British Army. Many left with the greatest reluctance, but the bitterness of their fellow countrymen left them no alternative.

They went, it was said, to "Hell, Hull, and Halifax." Many found their way to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada. Others sat out the war in London or in such provincial towns as Bristol. Still others were carried to the British island colonies in the West Indies, and a few went even further afield. Even after the war had ended, numerous families packed up and crossed the border to aid in building new colonies under the Crown.

In this great migration, America lost many who had much to contribute to the unfolding cultural life of the continent. Men of political and economic prominence were particularly notable among the emigrants. Thomas Hutchinson, faithful governor of Massachusetts, whose precious manuscript pages of his History of Massachusetts Bay had been scattered in the mud in the disgraceful Stamp Act riot, sailed for England never to return. The socially prominent James Delancey, leader of one of the political factions in New York, left a \$284,000 fortune behind him as he deserted this scene of chaos. From Charleston went Dr. Alexander Garden, the botanist for whom the beautiful and fragrant gardenia was named, and the Great Giant of Pennsylvania, William Allen, sadly turned his back on the land of his birth after seeing most of his sons accept commissions in the British Army.

Two groups important to American culture were lost. Men who wrote and studied and painted, and contributed their own



creative efforts left our shores. More numerous, however, were the men of taste who had wealth enough to encourage struggling artists; to subscribe for books written by authors who lacked the means of paying publication costs; and to contribute generously to maintain colleges, libraries, and other institutions designed for the incubation of culture. It is true that the patriot-Tory split was not a class division. Men of all walks of life became loyalists. Moreover, easy generalizations of any sort are dangerous; a considerable portion of the New York gentry and many of the legal profession in Massachusetts were loyalists, but in Virginia both groups, with only a few exceptions, joined the patriot ranks. Nevertheless, the loyalists who left the country did comprise a disproportionate number of men of wealth and position. Five of the six justices of the Massachusetts Supreme Court emigrated, but had they been five loyal cobblers in a group of six, it is very doubtful that they would have made the great voyage. As a corollary to their superior economic and social position, the loyalist emigrants possessed more learning and more of the trappings of culture than the average American.

Patronage and a taste for the finer things in life were the great losses suffered by America as the loyalists of position left their homes, both things being basically dependent upon wealth. Yet the emigrants took but a small portion of their wealth with them as they left. The wealth was in the country—in land, in shipping, in mercantile establishments. Much of the real wealth of the loyalists was confiscated by the new state governments and redistributed. To some extent, this land was broken up into smaller units, but concentration of wealth continued despite the process. Patronage was replaceable in a country of great and growing wealth. Genius was not as easy to replace, but fortu-



nately for the Americans they lost less in the way of genius than they did in wealthy, cultivated citizens.

Perhaps the most celebrated genius lost by America was the precocious child born Benjamin Thompson, who became Count Rumford of the Holy Roman Empire, the author of the modern theory of heat. He had begun his ascent to fame and immortality before the war, advancing himself by every expedient move that presented itself. He married a wealthy widow, ingratiated himself with the governor of New Hampshire, and became a spy for General Gage.<sup>3</sup> When the British Army withdrew from Boston, Thompson, leaving his wife behind, found it prudent to retire to London where it was estimated that his various positions yielded him almost £7,000 a year. From there he went on to carve out a name for himself in physics, technology, military affairs, and public administration. He had a creative mind, and if his personality was unpleasant, still, his scientific achievements were unparalleled by all who remained in America—or all, at least, except for Benjamin Franklin.

The outstanding artist usually held up as a loss to America because of his loyalist views is John Singleton Copley. Copley, however, was not a Tory; though he was not a patriot either. Rather, he hoped for some compromise of difficulties and should be described as a moderate.<sup>4</sup> He had made art pay big dividends while yet in his native Boston where he lived very well on returns from portraits of the well-to-do. He left America in 1773 because he was persuaded that still more success might fall to his lot in Europe. The success he met was as complete in its field as that won by Benjamin Thompson—his son, at least, becoming a peer.

<sup>3</sup> Allen French, *General Gage's Informers* (Ann Arbor, 1932) 115–146.

<sup>4</sup> See his letters to his wife July 2, 1775; July 22, 1775 in Martha Babcock Amory, *The Domestic and Artistic Life of John Singleton Copley, R.A.* (Boston, 1882), 57–58, 62.

Unlike Thompson's emigration, Copley's was not substantially influenced by the Revolution, but the realization of advantages to be gained by moving to England influenced both men. This pull of the richer environment would have drawn some Americans back to England even without a revolution.

The most numerous group of emigrants would never have considered leaving except for the Revolution. Their emigration too, requires careful interpretation. For one thing, many of them were merely war refugees who returned as soon as they could. Nearly all were grievously disappointed at the outcome of the war, but many quickly readjusted their thinking and tried to make peace with the victors. Only a portion of those who wished to return were able to; the rest being kept away by acts of banishment upon the part of state governments, by confiscation laws which offered no redress, and by the fact that British pensions might be forfeited by such a return.

A most pathetic picture was presented by Thomas Hutchinson—than whom no one loved America more deeply—as he revelled in his visits to Bristol because there the manners of the people most clearly approximated those of his beloved New Englanders. He existed several years in the hope of returning but died before the war had ended. Joseph Galloway, civil governor of Philadelphia during the British occupation, lived longer in the same hope and experienced more bitter disappointment in failure. Galloway was no artist or scientist himself, and his political and religious tracts had none of the literary merit that Hutchinson could claim, but he did belong to that class which had provided the necessary patronage for the growth of culture. After having made vain attempts to get permission to return from the government of Pennsylvania, Galloway consoled himself by giving what



aid he could to Americans visiting Britain and by resigning his thoughts to problems of religion.

Those who had played less prominent roles in the politics of the war period were able to make their peace more readily. Such was the experience of Samuel Curwen, well-to-do Salem merchant who left Massachusetts when political conditions became untenable for him. Early in the period of his English exile, he began to react against the corruptions of London and to resent the patronizing attitude of the English toward "their" colonies. He admitted that "nothing but the hopes of once more revisiting my native soil, enjoying my old friends within my own little domain, has hitherto supported my drooping courage. . . ."<sup>5</sup> After the war, he returned almost as soon as he was able to adjust the matter of the pension being paid him by the British government. Curwen was not altogether typical of the refugees in his feelings, but on the other hand, he was far from the first to return to his native land. He represented a considerable company of Tories of means which did return to the United States: men like Ward Nicholas Boylston who founded the Boylston Medical Library and Francis Green, a philanthropist, who wrote feelingly on the subject of deafness. The return of such men was a distinct gain for America. Even easier was the return of little men like James Humphreys, a Philadelphia printer; John Romage, a miniaturist; or the family of Christian Bergh, New York shipbuilder.<sup>6</sup>

A whole group of actors returned with equal avidity when the war had ended. The theatrical group known as the American Company had been virtually forced to leave the country when a recommendation of the Continental Congress in 1775 had closed

<sup>5</sup> *The Journal and Letters of Samuel Curwen* (New York, 1842), 161.

<sup>6</sup> *The Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-1936) 20 vols. was an indispensable index to and source of information about all the groups of migrants considered in this chapter.

the colonial theatres. Like many other artists, these men and women were more concerned with their own careers than with loyalty or rebellion. Nevertheless, when the leaders of the company, Lewis Hallam and John Henry, brought their troupe back after the war, they were branded as British actors and subjected to much patriotic opposition. Ultimately the antagonism subsided and the American Company continued its vital colonial role of presenting drama to the Americans.

Professional men were often much more deeply involved in the political aspects of the Revolution, but some of the most determined Tories did return. The Reverend Jacob Duché, for instance, author of "Caspipina's Letters" and other attempts at literature, had turned his coat too often, and had difficulty persuading Pennsylvania to permit him to come back. After constant efforts and entreaties, he did return some fifteen years after he had left. Other Anglican clergymen like Samuel A. Peters of Hebron, Connecticut, and Isaac Wilkins, who got a parish in Westchester, showed just as great persistence in their determination to return, though in the case of Peters, his repatriation was delayed until 1805. Dissenting clergymen who emigrated as loyalists had trouble returning too, but the Reverend Isaac Smith was not only permitted to return but was appointed librarian of the Harvard College library as early as 1789.

Physicians, like the clergy, belonged to the cultivated group which not only promoted the development of culture but also contributed themselves, and many of them migrated. Dr. Sylvester Gardiner, one of the leading physicians of Boston, was an ardent loyalist even before Lexington, but his stay abroad was brief as he was back in Newport by 1785. Dr. John Jefferies left Boston with the British too, and enjoyed a distinguished career in England where he gained some attention by his experiments with



balloons. Despite his success, he came back about 1790. Dr. Richard Bayley, a New Yorker, came back from England to serve with Howe, but he resigned and remained in New York after it was returned to the Americans. By 1792 he had become a professor at the college.

However we assess the effects of the loyalist emigrations, they can never be pictured as anything but a loss. Most of the loyalists never emigrated and some of those who did returned.<sup>7</sup> In some cases the wives and children came back after the death of the head of the family. But most of the loyalist emigrants never returned. None of the most prominent could. The eminence attained by various of these men in England, in Nova Scotia, in Canada, and elsewhere throughout the world is adequate indication that real injury was suffered by the United States in their defection.

There was, however, a counter current which did represent a gain for America and which in a measure canceled the losses suffered in the departure of the loyalists. This immigration associated with the Revolution is a much more difficult process to characterize because the selective influence exercised upon it by the Revolution is somewhat obscured by the absolute decline in numbers of immigrants which it also occasioned. The developing Revolution influenced immigration to the country to a minor degree even before the war began, more markedly while the contest was being waged, but most significantly in the few years after the war had ended.

The war demanded a declaration of loyalty and immediately

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<sup>7</sup> Many prominent loyalists never left the country. Among them were James Hamilton, Lt.-Governor of Pennsylvania; Andrew Oliver, author of significant articles on comets and waterspouts, whose family emigrated almost without exception; Dr. Samuel Bard, Washington's physician; the Reverend Benjamin Moore, president pro tempore of King's College; and the Reverend Samuel Seabury, the "Westchester Farmer."

brought some cultural gains to America. For one thing, it caused various European visitors to remain and to throw in their lot with the Americans, among them an interesting group of engineers. Bernard Romans was a Dutch engineer who had become principal deputy-surveyor for the Southern District before the war began. He was a man of varied talents who served America in the capacity of military engineer, cartographer, botanist, and historian. His superior also spent the end of his life in America. William Gerard De Brahm was surveyor-general of the Southern District before American Independence and published maps and sailing guides of real value in addition to some mystical religious works of doubtful significance. Robert Erskine was an engineer sent over by a private concern, the America Iron Company. He became active in the militia before the war and was ultimately appointed geographer and surveyor-general to the Continental Army. The war could not have been the only factor involved in compelling men like these to stay, but it did break up their old pattern of life and open new opportunities which they were ready to accept.<sup>8</sup>

The war caused a sharp change in the nature of immigration, bringing in cultured Germans, French, and other Europeans for the first time on any scale. It widened the horizons of the Americans, stimulating them in a manner that no number of exiled loyalists could have done. During the war itself, there was very little immigration not connected in some way with the conflict. The ports were seldom free to American traffic and most of the civilians who thought of coming to the United States waited until peace had been reestablished. There were some loyalist refugees who returned—particularly to New York during the long

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<sup>8</sup> Romans has been carefully studied in P. Lee Phillips, *Notes on the Life and Works of Bernard Romans* (Deland, Florida, 1924). Similar studies should be made of the other men.



period of British occupation—but this was an insignificant traffic. The biggest movement was that of troops to fight in America: British and German troops to fight for the Crown; French troops and various continental adventurers to fight alongside the Americans.<sup>9</sup>

Most of these European soldiers went back home with the end of the war, and the men of outstanding cultural attainment returned with them. Many French, British, and German officers, both diplomatic and military, were men of recognized capacity who stimulated American development in many fields during their brief visits. American engineering almost dates from the influence of such men as Duportail, Launoy, and Radiere. American medicine profited from contact with British surgery, but even more from the introduction to French techniques which were less well known. Moreover, the physicians were often men of broad learning like Johann David Schoepf, chief surgeon of the Ansbach-Bayreuth troops, who remained for a time after the war and published works on American geology, fish, turtles, frogs, climate, and disease. Perhaps the greatest representative of European academic learning to come to America was the Marquis de Chastellux, but he had less real influence than his compatriot Lafayette, who always considered it his high duty to keep his American friends informed of developments in the European world of letters.

The foreign troops exercised great cultural influence while in America but most of them—particularly the most cultured—returned with the end of the war. Some of the British and more of the German soldiers deserted and remained in America—certainly the Americans tried hard enough to bring about such a

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<sup>9</sup> The influence of this traffic upon American culture is considered in Dixon Ryan Fox's delightful essay "Culture in Knapsacks," *Ideas in Motion* (New York, 1935), 37-76.

development by propaganda and by marching Burgoyne's captured army across the country in the winter season. It has been estimated that only 12,500 of the 30,000 German troops sent to America ever returned, but most of the deserters were enlisted men of little learning.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes their craft knowledge was useful as in the case of the Hesse-Waldekian glass blowers employed by Robert Hewes. One English deserter, William Dorrell, founded a radical religious sect which attracted a large following for a time, but he could hardly be considered a benefit to American society. Fortunately, there were a few men of the caliber of the Reverend Frederick V. Melsheimer, chaplain of a regiment of Brunswick dragoons. Melsheimer had studied at the University of Helmstadt and continued his scholarly interests in America, not only as a college language professor, but as the first scientific entomologist in the country.

A still more important yield came to us from and through France. Most of those who stayed behind to enrich American life were men of small renown when they arrived—men like Quesnay de Beaurepaire, who conceived the most grandiose cultural project of the postwar period. He planned an Academy of the United States of America, a graduate school of arts and sciences which would place much emphasis upon creative achievement by the European staff and by the students. The project failed, but it left many marks behind it. Pierre Charles L'Enfant also fought in America and remained after peace had been won. He became the great designer of the national capital—a center of constant controversy but a man of acknowledged talent. The two dentists, Drs. James Gardette and Joseph LeMaire, added something to the respectability of American dentistry when they remained behind. Then there was the young secretary of Baron

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



Steuben, Peter Stephen Duponceau. Duponceau came over as a young man with enthusiasm for republican principles. He remained to become a successful lawyer by profession and a competent student of history, linguistics, and the American Indian. There were a few men of importance who came to America during the war without any military or diplomatic connections of any sort. Of these, the most outstanding, the Swiss-born Albert Gallatin, rejected an Hessian commission to come without fanfare to the "land of liberty." Gallatin became a forceful writer and a student of philology. In addition, he provided cultivated taste, interest, and patronage.

The period after the war saw the most important tide of immigration, and among these immigrants, the English Whigs demand first attention because their migration was almost a direct counterpart of the loyalist emigration. The American Revolution had divided the people of England to such an extent that even during the war there were men who declared on the floors of Parliament that the Americans were fighting their own fight for English constitutional liberties. A significant minority in the mother country looked forward to the development of the new nation with great enthusiasm. Many were ready with advice and with toasts to the thirteen United States; a few, even, were ready to emigrate to America to join in the great adventure.

A small group of liberal Whigs, the particular friends of Benjamin Franklin, was the most active nucleus of this pro-Americanism. Included were the dissenting clergymen Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, the pamphleteer James Burgh, the benevolent Quaker doctor John Fothergill, and well-to-do merchants like Samuel Vaughan. Most of them belonged to the Club of Honest Whigs.

The Reverend Richard Price was well known to the Americans

for his sermons and essays praising them and offering advice. He was also known for a treatise he had written upon statistics which formed the foundation for modern life insurance. In recognition of his friendship and of his financial capacities, the Congress of the United States in 1778 offered him a handsome income if he would remove to America and take over the management of the country's finances. Price replied that he reckoned this invitation "among the first honours of his life" coming from an assembly he considered "the most respectable and important in the world"—but he was not prepared to tear up his roots and become an American.<sup>11</sup>

More enterprising was Samuel Vaughan, a prosperous, restless Whig with a numerous family. He became somewhat intoxicated with ideas of American potentialities; even to the point of being ready to emigrate. Soon after the war had ended, not only the elder Vaughan but four of his grown sons made the voyage. The father stayed in the country only a few years but accomplished a great deal in that short time by way of encouraging American cultural developments. He aided in the publication of American books, laid out the garden of Independence Square in Philadelphia, and both designed and sustained the building of the Hall of the American Philosophical Society in that city. John and Benjamin, his sons, became leading citizens of the new country. John, in Philadelphia, became something of a permanent secretary of the American Philosophical Society and a clearing house for much of the intellectual life of Philadelphia while even in remote Hallowell, Maine, Benjamin encouraged the development of American letters and science.

William Thornton, a young Quaker physician, belongs in this circle too. He was born in the West Indies but educated in Eng-

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<sup>11</sup> Richard Henry Lee. *The Life of Arthur Lee* (Boston, 1829) I, 147.



land where he earned the friendship of friends of America like Dr. John Coakley Lettsom. Thornton came to the United States in 1787 and erected several monuments to himself as he pursued a new career in a new land. He gave up the practice of medicine to become a public servant of the broad eighteenth-century variety. He wrote treatises on teaching the deaf and dumb to talk and on alphabet reform; he designed the building erected in 1787 by the Library Company of Philadelphia, designed the Capitol building in Washington and had much to do with building the city. Thornton was not a complete success in any line of work, but he was a man of cultivated tastes who improved America by his efforts.

Most of the English radicals felt an identity of their struggles with those of the Americans, but only a few were more ready than Price, the moderate Whig, had been to emigrate. John Gardiner was a man tarred forever with the brush of radicalism by his association with the notorious John Wilkes for whom he had acted as counsel. Gardiner had been born in America, but long residence in England and success had made him seem a thoroughly acclimated Englishman. With the coming of peace, Gardiner returned permanently to the United States where he wrote on Roman poetry and crusaded against restrictions on the theatre. Catharine Macaulay, the radical historian, never thought of living in the United States, but she did visit the country as an evidence of her interest in the new nation.

The element in English society favorable to the Americans was relatively smaller than the large groups in Ireland and Scotland which enjoyed a sort of brotherhood in adversity. Enthusiasm for America was suppressed in Ireland, but valuable citizens did occasionally escape. Matthew Carey got into serious trouble when in his newspaper he pointed out that "America, by a desperate

effort, has nearly *emancipated herself* from slavery," and called upon the Irish to take the lesson to heart.<sup>12</sup> After various vicissitudes, he went to France where for a time he worked under the eye of Franklin. He then emigrated to America where Lafayette set him up in business as a printer. Carey became a very successful publisher of newspapers, magazines, and books and an author in his own right.

The Scotch and Scotch-Irish were enthusiastic about the Revolution for political, religious, and personal reasons. The Scotch intelligentsia had been coming into the colonies for many years, and after the war the current resumed. The Reverend Charles Nisbet came to Dickinson College following an earlier recommendation by Witherspoon and the earnest entreaties of Benjamin Rush. Walter Minto, a mathematician closely associated with Lord Buchan, who was a great friend to America, came over about the same time to add strength to the Princeton faculty. It was to Princeton, too, that John MacLean went a few years later to teach chemistry. Samuel Knox was a Glasgow graduate who taught at various schools, ultimately becoming principal of the Fredericksburg Academy. Printers like John Baine continued to come and men of hidden talents like Alexander Wilson who had failed as a poet but became a great ornithologist in America. William Maclure was a wealthy Scot who in America played a dual role as patron of culture and geologist in his own right.

After the war, British immigration became the most influential once again, but continental immigration continued to be more significant than it had been in the colonial period. Unknown men like Pierre Le Gaux came from France and remained despite a

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<sup>12</sup> "The Autobiography of Matthew Carey," *New England Magazine*, V (1833), 408.



certain hostility on the part of the Americans.<sup>13</sup> He failed in his attempt to establish viniculture in America, but it was Le Gaux who supplied the *Columbian Magazine* with what appear to have been reasonably accurate meteorological data each month. Adam Gerard Mappa came from Holland to "the country of patriot inspiration" to establish an unsuccessful type foundry.<sup>14</sup> Antoine Saugrain de Vigni, physician, naturalist, and explorer, took French culture to the American West. Lewis Wernwag, a bridge builder, and more German scholars like Charles Reichel and John Schmucker came to America to add their mite to the pile.

In the postwar period, men in various lines of work began to feel that America—now in a particularly fluid state—was a ripe field of opportunity. This was clear enough in the men who hoped to make money: men like John Jacob Astor and John Delafield both of whom came in 1783 almost at the first opportunity. Samuel Slater was another opportunist who came over to manage the first successful cotton textile factory on the English model. These men succeeded brilliantly and though they were not scientists and artists themselves, they created fortunes which led to cultivated taste and a part of which was diverted to cultural pursuits. Men of this stamp showed that patronage lost in the loyalist emigrations was not only replaceable, but that the wealth represented by the Delanceys or the Allens was small indeed compared with what was to come.

One of the greatest phenomena of the times was the flood of artists which nearly inundated the country after 1783. It is curious that so many portrait painters, miniaturists, sculptors, musicians, and actors really thought that there was need for their

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<sup>13</sup> Howard Mumford Jones, *America and French Culture, 1750–1848* (Chapel Hill, 1927) 141, asserts that Le Gaux was an assumed name.

<sup>14</sup> *D.A.B.*, XII, 18.

talents in the United States. They were attracted by the opportunities they expected to develop from the artistic needs of a new nation, but they were not unaffected by republican enthusiasm. Giuseppi Ceracchi came from Italy with the design for a memorial to American liberty in the form of a gigantic marble monument and was shocked when he failed to find the necessary support for his heartfelt scheme. He executed a few busts of important men and then moved on to France where he was shortly guillotined—a martyr to his love of liberty. Ceracchi was the first real sculptor in the United States and he was succeeded by others. John Dixey, an Irish sculptor, found considerable employment in the execution of figures for public buildings. Like many of the artists, the German sculptor, John Eckstein, came to the country about 1794—after the large-scale emigrations associated with the French Revolution had begun.<sup>15</sup>

Specialists in every type of art poured into the country from England, Ireland, Scotland and the continent. Among the British painters came Archibald and Alexander Robertson, Robert Field, Walter Robertson, James Sharples, and William Earle, who was returning to the land of his birth when he died. Continental painting was represented by Adolph U. Wertmuller from Sweden, Joshua Carter from Denmark, and from France Saint-Memin and Belzons. Belzons is known primarily as the first instructor of Thomas Sully. Many of these men did some engraving, but William Rollinson and John Roberts specialized in that craft. Benjamin Carr and Alexander Reinagle were both composers of music, but Reinagle had particular success in concert work in America. Unlike most of the artists, James Fennell, a rather successful British actor, came to the United States under contract

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<sup>15</sup> William Dunlap, *The Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the U.S.*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1934), is still the best survey of artists of the period, but it is not complete.



rather than upon his own initiative. Of all this group of immigrants, few found sufficient commissions in sculpture, portraiture, or music to support themselves though they were likely to have more success in such an allied craft as engraving. Many earned their living by teaching art; or they moved on to another state, back to Europe, or even to the East Indies.

Robert Edge Pine had as good chances of success in America as any of the artists, but he died before his defeat had become certain. In London, Pine had won two gold medals from the Society of Arts for historical paintings, and he might have gone further except that Benjamin West had shortly thereafter preempted the field. In America, he conceived a project somewhat similar to that of Cerrachi except that Pine's work would be executed on canvas rather than in marble. He would begin by painting the individual portraits of the Revolutionary leaders and then combine the men in great canvasses depicting the pivotal events in the epoch struggle. He had some success in portraiture but had given up the grandiose historical projects when death claimed him. For a time his family continued the art school he had begun and then they returned to England. It seems clear, therefore, that the development of American art was not impeded by a lack of willing artists as much as by a lack of the support required from society to sustain their activity.

A large influx of immigrants, studded with men of education and creative talent, was felt only ten years after the conclusion of peace and may be considered a second harmonic of the American Revolution, although it was directly caused by the French Revolution. After 1793, the terror of the French Revolution drove thousands of conservatives and disillusioned liberals out of France and at the same time displaced many English liberals now persecuted by the exaggerated conservatism of their own coun-

try. Because of past associations, America became the natural refuge of British as well as continental refugees. Many great figures came from France, but they did not remain long. Some of the lesser men did and many who escaped from Haiti made their homes here.

The English yield from this period of immigration was probably more valuable, being headed by Joseph Priestley and Thomas Cooper, both of whom fled England because their political views had made their life unpleasant. Their earlier interest in America and their bias in favor of the country and its government drew them here almost inevitably. The older man did none of his major work in America, but he did continue experimenting and published here in both chemistry and religion. Thomas Cooper played a fuller role in American life, becoming active in politics as well as in science, education, and learning in general. From England, too, came Benjamin Henry Latrobe in 1796. For him, 1793 marked not only a new turn in politics, but the death of his wife which severely affected him. He came to America with means and left behind him the prospect of the continuance of a brilliant career.

In a decreasing degree the American Revolution continued to influence the thinking of Europeans who considered emigrating to America, and perhaps its effects are not even yet entirely dissipated. Yet, it is only of the generation that lived through the War of Independence that we can speak with any real meaning. For them, the Revolution was a vital factor. Even here, however, the mere listing of categories of men and the outstanding names among them leaves a somewhat confused picture of the influence of these migrations upon American culture. Specific episodes in which immigrants played important roles will help to demonstrate this influence.



One excellent example of this sort can be found in the planning and building of the national capital at Washington—a work done very largely by these immigrants. It was Pierre Charles L'Enfant who was originally invited by George Washington to survey and plan the federal city. L'Enfant had come to America during the Revolution under his own expense to serve in the American Army as an engineer, and he had remained, executing various architectural commissions, most notably Federal Hall in New York. L'Enfant displayed genius and energy and his plan still dominates the configuration of Washington, but at the same time, he demonstrated an imperious conduct which finally led to his dismissal. Among those who carried out the actual survey of the city was an English immigrant of 1784, Thomas Freeman. L'Enfant had been expected to design the federal buildings, but after his dismissal, a public competition was announced under Jefferson's prompting for the design of the Capitol building and the president's house.

The competition for the design of the president's house was won by James Hoban who had immigrated from Ireland in 1785. He was retained to supervise the construction of the edifice and remained in this employ until it was occupied by President Adams.

The two leading designs for the Capitol were both submitted by immigrants: one by William Thornton, the ambitious amateur, and the other by Etienne Sulpice Hallet, a professional, who may have come to America in connection with Quesnay's academy. Thornton's plan was finally accepted, but it contained certain features of Hallet's, and Hallet himself was retained to supervise its construction—modifying Thornton's plan as much as required. Differences of opinion developed, however, leading to Hallet's dismissal and temporary replacement by James



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Hoban, the man who was building the president's home. When William Thornton was appointed one of the commissioners of the city, he fought for the restoration of as much of his original plan as possible. He was able to carry through his ideas pretty well against the next superintendent, George Hadfield, who was invited to come to the United States for that purpose by the city commissioners in 1795. Hadfield also furnished the designs for the Treasury and Executive Offices but was dismissed in 1798 when Hoban took over supervision once again. Finally in 1803, Benjamin Henry Latrobe was made surveyor of public buildings. He was able to contend satisfactorily against Thornton and to complete the south wing of the Capitol. For the execution of the statuary and marble work foreign artists were called into the country much as Hadfield had been. Thus the plan of the city, the design of the principal buildings and their execution was carried out by men, all of whom had come to the United States within a few years of the end of the Revolution.<sup>16</sup>

Higher education was benefited by the postwar immigrants in a similar manner. This was particularly true of the dissenting institutions for they were closer in spirit to the English liberals and to the Scotch intelligentsia. No institution better typifies this gain than Dickinson College which was aided in many ways by these pro-American circles in Britain. The college library was put together from many contributions, prominent among them gifts from Dr. John Erskine in Scotland; Granville Sharp, Dr. John Coakley Lettsom, and Dr. Richard Price in England; and Samuel Vaughan, one of the English circle who came to America. Even more important were the roles played by three other men whose coming to America was related to the American Revolution:

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<sup>16</sup> See Glenn Brown, *History of the U.S. Capitol* (Washington, 1900); Charles E. Fairman, *Art and Artists of the Capitol of the U.S.A.* (Washington, 1927); Elizabeth S. Kite, *L'Enfant and Washington* (Baltimore, 1929); and brief sketches of men involved by Fiske Kimball in *D.A.B.*



Charles Nisbet, the first president, who guided the school through its formative years; Thomas Cooper, the English radical who taught chemistry at the college; and Benjamin Henry Latrobe who designed the school's first permanent building.

Of these, Charles Nisbet was clearly the most important, and Nisbet's coming to America was as clearly associated with the American Revolution as was the very founding of Dickinson College. During the War of American Independence, Nisbet had not taken a treasonable position, but he did criticize the North ministry and ask for a more enlightened attitude toward America. This stand certainly pleased his good friend John Witherspoon, already a firm American patriot and a great intellectual force as president of the College of New Jersey. Apparently it was Nisbet's attitude toward the Revolution which led to the honorary degree granted him by Witherspoon's college in 1783. After the war Nisbet continued to view the development of America with great hope and looked favorably upon the offer of the presidency of Dickinson College by Benjamin Rush and the Trustees. Witherspoon and other friends now tried to dissuade him from accepting, but Rush's enthusiasm and Nisbet's faith in America and his capacity to aid America overcame his resistance. His presidency was far from an unqualified success, but he did bring a degree of learning to the frontier. After he had been here but a short while, Nisbet turned his critical faculties upon the American government and urged a very pro-British policy. It may very well be, however, as his most recent biographer maintains, that Nisbet was in reality more pro-American than anything else; that he was nervously anxious that she be led in the right path.<sup>17</sup>

When Thomas Cooper decided to come to America after the

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<sup>17</sup> See Jean Lowe, *An Inquiry into the Life and Ideas of Charles Nisbet*. Ms. Master's Thesis. Columbia University, 1944.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

British government had become ultra-conservative, he stated his reasons very clearly. The first advantage offered by America was "The total absence of anxiety respecting the future success of a family." But second, he declared that "There is little fault to find with the government of America, either in principle or in practice. . . . The government is the government *of* the people, and *for* the people."<sup>18</sup> The Revolution, whatever its limitations in achieving political democracy, had certainly made America a more eligible place to men of the aspirations of Thomas Cooper. In America, Cooper first directed his major energies to public pursuits: law, politics, and the bench. It was the high honor of Dickinson College to offer him his first American academic appointment in 1811 after he had been driven from the bench by partisan opposition. His period at Dickinson was a productive one in writing and editing scholarly material. The course he offered at the college in chemistry, his great study, was a milestone in the history of science in America.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe came to America, not because he sought greater success than he enjoyed in England, but because he sought escape from the life he knew and because he viewed America with affection. He was not active in politics but had usually taken a liberal position and thought in the warmest terms of the great American experiment. After he had been here awhile, Latrobe, in drawing a parallel between Greece and America, stated in so many words what America meant to him by remarking that the source of Greek artistic eminence was simply this, "Greece was free; in Greece every citizen felt himself an important and thought himself an essential part of his republic."<sup>19</sup> Latrobe's connection with Dickinson was of the briefest possible

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, (London, 1794), 52.

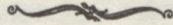
<sup>19</sup> B. Henry Latrobe, *Anniversary Oration. Pronounced before the Society of Artists of the United States*. (Philadelphia, 1811), 10.



duration, but the sketch he submitted which became the basis of West College was translated into a permanent monument, not only to Latrobe, but to the hundreds of men who came to America and who canceled some of the losses suffered in the emigration of our loyalists.

Indeed, it would not seem unreasonable to maintain that in cultural matters, the immigrants of the Revolutionary era more than made up for the losses incident to the loyalist emigrations. There is no shadow of doubt but that the United States would have been far richer had none of the loyalists left her shores. Yet the same Revolution which drove out the loyalists encouraged the entry of other men of talent and capacity. The immigrant was a man of many nations, of many crafts and arts, and—more often than not—of driving energy. He broadened American horizons and deepened our traditions. Often he brought a learning or skill that was not then very common in America. He made it a different land from that which the loyalist had left—still poorer but also richer.

SENATOR HENRY MOORE RIDGELY,  
OF DELAWARE, DICKINSON 1797\*



John A. Munroe

FROM Carlisle in the year 1797 a fifteen-year-old boy wrote, "Nothing but the most tragical thing could move the People about this town."<sup>1</sup> The boy was George Wemyss Ridgely, who, with his brother, was then spending his last year at Dickinson. It is the brother's tale that is to be told here, the tale of Henry Moore Ridgely, and it is neither particularly tragical nor is it unique, except as any man's life is both tragical and unique.

It is a tale that commingles the Delaware State and Dickinson College and a life of usefulness. And this is a combination that has often been joined together. Time and again Dickinson College has called Delawareans, nurtured them, and sent them forth to lives of useful service. Up from Penn's lower counties to this school in the Cumberland Valley has come a procession of men

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\* Dr. Munroe is Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Delaware. The lecture was delivered on April 24, 1953.

The author wishes to acknowledge his gratitude to the members of the Ridgely family who have provided for the preservation and publication of the Ridgely papers that are now in the Delaware State Archives, Dover. His debt is obviously great to two published works, *The Ridgelys of Delaware & Their Circle, What Them Befell in Colonial & Federal Times: Letters, 1751-1890*, edited by Mabel Lloyd Ridgely (Portland, Maine, 1949), and *A Calendar of Ridgely Family Letters, 1742-1899, in the Delaware State Archives*, edited by Leon de Valinger, Jr., and Virginia E. Shaw (2 vols. thus far, Dover, 1948- ). Hereafter the former work will be cited as "Ridgely" and the latter work as "Calendar."

<sup>1</sup> George W. Ridgely to Mrs. Ann Ridgely, Feb. 14, 1797, Ridgely, 96.



—students and teachers and Trustees—till it has seemed that the road must be well marked by their coming.

John Dickinson, the sage of Delaware, was the first, and in the quiet last years of his life he drew to Delaware the wise man of the college, the learned Scot, Dr. Nisbet, who annually traveled to Wilmington for the pleasures of Dickinson's company. So we are told, at any rate, by the writing parson, the Reverend Samuel Miller. Miller was also a Delawarean, and he came to Carlisle in 1791 to study theology with Dr. Nisbet.<sup>2</sup>

In the wake of Miller and Ridgely there came from Delaware to Dickinson members of the most famous families of the little state. Read, McComb, Black, Stockton, Fisher, Hayes, Sykes, Wells, du Pont, Lockwood, Bates, Smithers, Saulsbury, Cummins, Townsend, Nicholson, Prettyman, Pennewill, Lore, Houston, Naudain, and Cannon were among the Delaware names found on Dickinson's alumni roster before the Civil War. Three chancellors of Delaware were educated here in that period, and three United States Senators.

In the earliest years there was a Presbyterian connection between Dickinson College and northern Delaware, the Scotch-Irish region of the state. Two of Dickinson's early teachers, Robert Davidson and William Thomson, were drawn from the Presbyterian academy at Newark, Delaware, that was to grow into the state university. And within a few years three Dickinsonians, John Waugh, William Cochran, and Andrew Kerr Russell, became principals of this academy.

After Dickinson College made a Methodist connection in 1833, its attraction to Delawareans became even stronger. For Delaware lay on a peninsula that was the garden of Methodism;

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Miller, *Memoir of the Rev. Charles Nisbet, D.D., Late President of Dickinson College, Carlisle* (New York, 1840), 210, 226-227.

in its rural areas Methodists were overwhelmingly the largest religious group, and they came now to Dickinson as the nearest college of their faith. Levi Scott, a Delawarean, became both a Trustee of Dickinson College and a principal of its grammar school.<sup>3</sup> Another Trustee of Dickinson, Henry Boehm, and a graduate, Robert Todd, wrote histories of the Methodist Church in Delaware and its environs.<sup>4</sup>

## I

It was not family devotion either to Presbyterianism or to Methodism that led Henry Ridgely to Dickinson. His Ridgely forebears were stalwart Anglicans, indeed, members at once of the Church of England and of its ally, the Delaware gentry. His father's half-sister married Charles Inglis, who became the first Anglican bishop of Nova Scotia. His father's full sister married Samuel Magaw, rector of churches in Dover and Philadelphia. His mother's family, the Moores, had as strong an Anglican connection; his mother's sister married the Rev. Dr. William Smith, able and disagreeable first provost of the College of Philadelphia and founder of Washington College, at Chestertown, Maryland.

Such strong church connections in Delaware betokened political connections, too. In these lower counties of the Penns, the Quakers had never been dominant. Delaware, which had no western frontier, had been populated and all her counties established before William Penn arrived in America. On a Dutch and Swedish foundation, Anglican Englishmen had filled out the colony in the days of the Duke of York's rule. Then and later

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<sup>3</sup> J. B. Lippincott and O. B. Super, *Alumni Record of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.* (Harrisburg, 1886), and George L. Reed, *Alumni Record, Dickinson College* (Carlisle, 1905), *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Boehm, *Reminiscences, Historical and Biographical, of Sixty-four Years in the Ministry* (New York, 1865), and Robert Todd, *Methodism of the Peninsula* (Philadelphia, 1886).



a steady stream of migrants moved eastward into Delaware from the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

This predominantly Anglican group looked upon Pennsylvania as an upstart northern province, one that threatened to devour them in its growth. They sought and secured from Penn a colonial assembly of their own that guaranteed them a large voice in the government of their bailiwick. Pennsylvania's governor was still their own governor, but he stayed to the north and bothered them little. Having secured their local control by the year 1704, they rested content with their achievement and with their lot. Their land, their government, their church, their prosperity, all being assured by the early eighteenth century, Delawareans became settled in the pursuit of their livelihood and contemplated with a measure of suspicion all movements that threatened to disturb their composure. All was well in Delaware; let Scotch-Irish immigrants, radical Revolutionists, and egalitarian Republicans take care they did not upset this trim little ship of state.

Into such a content society Henry Ridgely was born, in the year 1779, but his life might have been one of chagrin and disappointment had the old colonial order of Delaware been violently overset by a new republican society. But that was not to be. In Delaware the old order triumphed, gracefully permitting modifications as time went on. For in Delaware the old order was genuinely popular. Here was no mass discontent, no wide-spread sullen dissatisfaction. "The people of Delaware do not change suddenly. They are a steady thinking people, and take great pride in maintaining their opinions," wrote a Washingtonian on observing election returns in 1828.<sup>5</sup> Year after year the yeomanry

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<sup>5</sup> S. Pleasanton to T. M. Rodney, Washington, Oct. 10, 1828, Brown Collection (Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington).

elected to office the gentry, members of the land-holding families, and their professional connections in medicine and law. The Delaware aristocracy, indeed, were not so very aristocratic. The gap between the yeomanry, who had the votes, and the gentry, who held the offices of state, was not very great. "There is nothing of the Virginia character among the people," said a campaigning politician in 1811, and he spoke the truth.<sup>6</sup>

Contentment and moderation were the keys to the Delaware character. Listen to the message of a Delaware governor in the year 1827, a Federalist governor, if you please, though textbooks and historians generally may infer that the Federalist party had died long before this date: "We are in more danger of suffering by innovations, than from a deficiency of legislation. . . . Of all the states in the Union, to none is it so preëminently important that the General Government should be preserved entire and unimpaired." If the Constitution is "so patched and altered . . . that it shall be injured by every unfriendly attack, to what ark shall we fly for our temporal safety and happiness? . . . I would not, had I the power, permit a single pin to be removed from this sacred temple of liberty, nor would I suffer any trapping to be added under the pretense of embellishment or improvement. . . ."<sup>7</sup>

There was, of course, some disagreement in Delaware. A July Fourth toast of 1810 spoke of "Connecticut and Delaware—again sole companions in affliction, and the only props of federalism."<sup>8</sup> A newspaper protested that the Delaware legislature took no forward steps, passed no bills except insignificant ones relating to muskrats and swine:

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<sup>6</sup> "A Juryman" in the *Wilmington Delaware Statesman*, Sept. 28, 1811.

<sup>7</sup> *Wilmington Delaware Gazette*, Jan. 9, 1827.

<sup>8</sup> *Wilmington American Watchman*, July 7, 1810.



Among the most notable acts and transactions of a most notable assembly, at a late sitting of the notables, are the following very noted and notorious items, viz.

An act to prevent swine from becoming pork—postponed for consideration till the falling of the next mast.

An act to prevent large swine from creeping through small holes—postponed. . . .

An act to prevent pigs from squealing—passed.

An act for raising the bristles on the back of certain swine, in sufficient quantities to supply American brush manufacturers—passed, *nemine contradicente*. [This is patriotic.]

An act to prevent the increase of musk-rats . . . and for other obnoxious purposes. . . .

An act to prevent musk-rats from swimming against wind and tide, or either of them . . .<sup>9</sup>

A newspaper correspondent declared that a junto ran the politics of Ridgely's county, Kent: "Do not offices run in the blood of families and descend from father to son? Have not most of the offices of this country for a long succession of years been confined to a few individuals? and were not the fathers, brothers, uncles, etc. of the most of the present office holders, office holders also?"<sup>10</sup> In the same vein of criticism, a newspaper critic once called Henry Ridgely "a prince of the royal blood of Dover."<sup>11</sup>

So he was. The Ridgelys were well-to-do landowners in Maryland before Henry's grandfather, Nicholas Ridgely, came to Delaware. Nicholas was a gentleman and a judge, and some measure of his political legacy to his state may be found in the careers of three younger men toward whom he bore some responsibility. One was his ward, Caesar Rodney, Delaware's famous

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 10, 1810.

<sup>10</sup> "Plain Matter of Fact" in *ibid.*, Sept. 30, 1809.

<sup>11</sup> *Watchman*, Sept. 12, 1810.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Revolutionary patriot; another was his step-son, John Vining, who became chief justice of the Lower Counties; and a third was his son, Henry's father, Dr. Charles Ridgely, a physician and politician, leader of the dominant political faction, the court party, in Kent County. This party Dr. Charles Ridgely guided along lines of moderation, to avoidance of excesses, through the Revolution.

If Henry Ridgely's father was a moderate in the Revolution, there were other relatives who were more or less forthright Tories. His mother was born Ann Moore, daughter of Judge William Moore, of Moore Hall, Chester County, Pennsylvania. On this side of the family were related, by blood or by marriage, such patriots as General John Cadwalader, Major John Berrien, and, later, Commodore Jacob Jones, and such loyal subjects of the King as a colonial governor of South Carolina, an attorney-general, register-general, and collector of customs in colonial Pennsylvania, two Tory British consuls in America, and a Lord Chancellor of England. Indeed it is claimed that one of Henry Ridgely's ancestral lines may be traced back to one of the most famous supporters of legitimate monarchy, to Macduff, Thane of Fife.<sup>12</sup> If so, Delaware may claim to have furnished Dickinson College with both a Macduff, in Henry Ridgely, and a Macbeth, for Alexander Macbeth, of Newark, Delaware, was graduated from Dickinson in the class of 1825.

Certainly Henry Ridgely was of the royal blood of Dover. But if born to the purple, he was not to be spoiled by parental indulgence. When he was six, his father died, and his mother was left a widow with five children, all under eleven years of age. Henry's mother, then, rather than his father, was most influential

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<sup>12</sup> John W. Jordan, ed., *Colonial Families of Philadelphia*, II (New York, 1911), 1153.



in his upbringing. Still the Ridgely lineage was of environmental importance to Henry, for he had two older half-brothers through his father's first marriage and he lived moreover in Kent County, the home of his father, rather than in Pennsylvania, like the Moores. There was, of course, much traveling back and forth between Dover and Philadelphia, much visiting with Cadwaladers and Bonds and other Moore relations. But the dominant figure in Henry's rearing was the wise and cultured woman who was his mother, who chose to rear her children in rural simplicity and to prepare them for lives of usefulness away from what she feared was the senseless gaiety and wicked scepticism of the crowded cities.

When Henry and his brother George went off to Dickinson College, she warned them to be frugal.

Let me once more entreat you, my Dr Sons, to be frugal; not mean, by any means, but let nothing tempt you to extravagance—'tis the certain bane of happiness—it is the high road to destruction; if I sh[oul]d be ever so wretched as to find you sh[oul]d, either of you, indulge yourselves in extravagance it w[oul]d blast all my hopes of you, and be the breaking of my heart, for ev'ry pleasing prospect of my remain[in]g days is deriv'd from the hopes of my tenderly beloved children all turning out respectable characters and if only one, among the five, sh[oul]d happen to be otherwise I sh[oul]d go down to the grave with anguish.

Let me intreat you not to spend your time during the vacation in Idleness. Allot some hours ev'ry day to reading and improving yourselves in a knowledge of History &c, and in writing on any subjects that may be most pleasing to you; spend the rest in Manly exercises among proper companions, but not at Taverns let the company be who they may, nor among Women and Girls, from whom nothing but nonsense and affectation is generally met with now a days. A young Lady visited here last week who profess'd

herself 'astonished to find your sisters at work,' and declared, in a sweet simper, that she never [had] Sizars, thimble, needle or thread ab[ou]t her, for it was terrible in a Lady to wear a p[ai]r of Pockets—the French Ladies never did such a thing. What can such a poor vain piece of affectation and folly be worth? Nothing—and if she possess'd the wealth of The Indies and I was a man I w[oul]d scarcely even pay her the compliment of a word. I hope the fair ones of Carlisle are not so *frenchified*, but let them be what they may, y[ou]r Books, if well chosen, are much more suitable companions at y[ou]r ages than any other.<sup>13</sup>

## II

Henry Ridgely's early education and that of his brother, George Wemyss Ridgely, were gained in Dover. One of his teachers was a Reverend John Brush. Another was Robert Johnston, who had been one of the first professors at Dickinson. But schooling in Dover was an uncertain business. Good teachers seldom stayed there long. One boy, who had studied Latin in Dover for two years, found he had to begin all over again when he went to Philadelphia. The other pupils laughed at his ignorance, for he did not even know the meaning of parsing. Yet the tuition was twice as high in Dover as in Philadelphia, he said: "Double price for erroneous principles."<sup>14</sup>

Thus it was that at the age of fifteen Henry Ridgely and his thirteen-year-old brother George were sent away from home for the first time, to the Newark Academy, which was forty miles from Dover. "I confess I feel all the anxiety natural to a Mother on the thought of part[*in*]g with them," wrote Mrs. Ridgely to the principal, William Thomson. She hoped Thomson would

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<sup>13</sup> Ridgely, 93-94.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal of the Life of Nathaniel Luff, M.D., of the State of Delaware* (New York, 1848), 5-7.



take the boys into his house and regulate "their behaviour, the company they may keep, and . . . their hours of rising and going to bed." "They have not been spoiled by indulgence—if I judge rightly," she suggested, "but, as mothers are s[ai]d to be always blind to their Children, perhaps I err. . . . I lament the loss of every day they are [away] from school."<sup>15</sup>

The boys arrived at Newark Academy in March, 1794, and boarded with the principal. Expressions of a mother's fond interest flowed after them to Newark: Mrs. Thomson was begged to chide them "whenever they deserve it."<sup>16</sup> "Caution them as you would do your own," Mr. Thomson was asked. Do not "suffer either of my boys to be absent from your House later of an Even[ing] than you would chose one of your own of their ages sh[oul]d be." "Inquire into their conduct and conversation without doors, and the company they may associate with. . . . I wish my Sons sh[oul]d be good scholars and that as they are both to study some profession I would wish that their school education should be finished as soon as they can attain a perfect knowledge of the Languages."<sup>17</sup>

Apparently Henry and George Ridgely were happy at Newark with the Thomsons. They made friends with the Thomson boys, but the friendship was interrupted after six months, for at the close of the school term, in September, 1794, William Thomson left Newark to assume the professorship of Greek and Latin at Dickinson College.

As soon as Mrs. Ridgely heard of Thomson's intended transfer, she began to inquire into the possibility of sending her boys to Carlisle too. The distance, 120 miles, and the bad roads, seemed the chief obstacles to her.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting that her information

<sup>15</sup> Ridgely, 68–69.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>18</sup> *Calendar*, I, 126.

on the state of the roads came from two Dover physicians, who were to be among the leading practitioners of their profession in America. One was Dr. James Tilton, the other Dr. Edward Miller. Neither is known to have been associated with Dickinson College, but both were Presbyterians, both were friends of Benjamin Rush, the college's great patron, and both were now associated with John Dickinson in Delaware politics. Furthermore Dr. Miller, who was in love with one of the Ridgely girls, was the brother of Dr. Nisbet's former student, Samuel Miller.

From William Thomson, too, Mrs. Ridgely secured information. Tuition at Carlisle, he told her, was the same as at Newark—£5. Board was £30 or higher. He could not promise to board them yet, since he had not yet moved from Newark when he wrote, and he did not know how large his new home would be.<sup>19</sup>

Mrs. Ridgely made at least one more inquiry. Through her niece, Mrs. John Cadwalader, of Philadelphia, she approached a Trustee of Dickinson College. This was Thomas Smith, the brother of her brother-in-law, Dr. William Smith. Smith replied that the classical languages, "Mathematics, with their application to Astronomy, Surveying, Geography, etc., moral Philosophy, Logic, etc.," were taught at Carlisle. Dr. Nisbet, he added, gave strict supervision, and the students were well-behaved. The climate was healthy—this was never said of Dover. Finally, Smith confirmed Thomson's account of the cost of board in Carlisle and assured Mrs. Ridgely that prominent residents of the town would interest themselves in the boys and report to her on their conduct.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of these reports, Mrs. Ridgely returned the boys to Newark. Possibly she felt that Henry at sixteen, and George at fourteen, were too young to go farther from home. More likely

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-129.



she was disturbed by news of the Whiskey Rebellion and of its proximity to Carlisle. At the very time of her inquiries, Washington led his troops through the town en route to crush the rebellion.<sup>21</sup>

Back in Newark, in October, 1794, the boys boarded with Thomson's successor, whom they found "good-natured, but not as good a scholar." Nor was the Newark Academy flourishing—it had but thirteen students.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps for these reasons, Mrs. Ridgely determined in the spring of 1795 to send her sons to Carlisle. Thomas Smith assured her that the rebellion was quieted and that adequate stage connections existed between Carlisle and Philadelphia.<sup>23</sup>

Off the boys went in June, 1795, and again, as in Newark, they made their homes with William Thomson. To him Mrs. Ridgely sent the usual admonishments. "I hope they will be industrious," she added; "Harry, I believe has not been, at any time thought otherwise."<sup>24</sup> She could not say as much for George, who took little interest in his studies. Indeed George's scholastic career at Dickinson proved something of a disappointment. "Hearing that George did not apply himself to his Books with as much diligence" as was necessary to prepare for a profession, Mrs. Ridgely reluctantly gave him permission to drop Greek and Latin and concentrate on mathematics. But she discovered that this decision left him idle much of the time, so a return to Latin study was soon demanded of him.<sup>25</sup> Henry explained to his mother that the trouble lay in part with the mathematics teacher, probably James McCormick. He "lets the boys study if they please," wrote Henry, "and if they do not please, he seems to

<sup>21</sup> J. B. Smith, "A Frontier Experiment with Higher Education," in *Bulwark of Liberty: Early Years at Dickinson* (Carlisle, 1950), 96.

<sup>22</sup> *Calendar*, I, 131, 133.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>24</sup> Ridgely, 84.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

care nothing about [it]: he is tho' a very expert mathematician." Such poor teaching apparently delayed the graduation of Henry's class from the spring of 1797 until the fall. "We shall not commence untill Fall as we are not fit to stand an examination in the mathematics," Henry explained.<sup>26</sup>

But if George was deficient in his studies, he showed aptitude for at least one phase of extra-curricular activities, dramatics. He played the difficult and dramatic part of Callista, an unchaste bride, the title role in Nicholas Rowe's tragedy, *The Fair Penitent*, which the students performed early in 1797. Henry, as befit the lawyer, banker, and statesman he was to become, took the part of Sciolto, Callista's father, a heroic, noble, and somewhat stiff gentleman of Genoa. Thanks to George, we know how the characters were dressed. "I had on," he wrote his mother, "a white satin petticoat and jacket with a long musselin train . . . spangled and had gold fring[e] along the bottom and my head was dressed very well. I looked . . . extremely like a bride [George was fifteen] in the four first acts & in the last I was dressed in black. I had on white sattin shoes . . . also in the first acts. Hary . . . had on a long purple robe & overhals done about with silver lace. . . . My dress coast about 14 Dollars. there was more money cleared with it than any other play that has been acted here this great while, which went to the Poor about town."<sup>27</sup>

*The Fair Penitent* caused a rupture in the good relations between the boys and Professor Thomson. "When I acted in the play," George wrote, "Thompson was mad and said I had not time. . . . Thompson thinks it is a sin to act plays; but that did not hinder me. All the people in this town wish their children to act, and one of the managers in the play we acted was a trustee of the Collige and if they and the rest of the teachers are agreed I

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.



do not think Thompson has any right to say anything about it. I like him very well only [except] on that account and I had rather live in his house than any other in town."<sup>28</sup>

On another occasion, however, Harry had a quarrel with Professor Thomson and considered leaving his house. Mrs. Ridgely discouraged any such move and particularly warned against moving into any family that included "flirting, giddy Women or Girls."<sup>29</sup> She warned the boys too against "trifling amusements,"<sup>30</sup> against agreeable but wicked companions,<sup>31</sup> and against "gaming in any sort whatsoever,"<sup>32</sup> for she thought it "inconsistent with the character of a Christian, a Gentleman, or even a rational creature."<sup>33</sup>

Her responsibility for the boys weighed heavily on Mrs. Ridgely. "Few women," she wrote to Professor Thomson, "are capable of directing the education of their Sons. . . . I am ever anxious for the good of my children. My sons are far from me. Let me entreat you, Sir, to give them your best advice. They are young, the eldest not yet 17, and they are among Strangers."<sup>34</sup>

Picture her consternation then when a neighbor's boy returned from Carlisle with wild tales of student life there. Henry was specifically charged with spending his time in taverns, with drinking, and with joining "in giving Balls which cost each person from a dollar to ten shillings the night." Mrs. Ridgely was prostrated.<sup>35</sup> "Hearing that you, Harry, spent almost every Even[ing] at Tavern, and in frolic & Dancing, has been almost too much for me."<sup>36</sup>

But Henry had an explanation. He was taking dancing lessons and in genteel company. This satisfied Mrs. Ridgely; she thought

<sup>28</sup> To Mrs. Ridgely, Carlisle, March 19, 1797, *ibid.*, 98.

<sup>29</sup> *Calendar*, I, 150.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>34</sup> Ridgely, 92.

<sup>35</sup> *Calendar*, I, 304.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

graceful manners and good carriage essential to a gentleman.<sup>37</sup>

Graceful manners and a college education both seemed to come at a high price, though. Like many other parents, Mrs. Ridgely was concerned by the continual need the boys had for money. Her collections came in slowly, she told them; sometimes she was frightened at the cost. "I am really amazed at the expenses of Carlisle," she wrote in October, 1797.<sup>38</sup>

Sending the boys clothes and materials for clothes brought her more pleasure than sending money. Brown cloth was sent for coats, black silk for breeches,<sup>39</sup> cotton and silk stockings (homespun) of brother Nicholas's that were too small for him, nine shirts held up for lack of "cambrick to ruffle the bosoms."<sup>40</sup> Sister Williamina also took an interest in the boys' clothes. She told them of two much admired waistcoats for which Mama drew the patterns and which a tailor made in the newest fashion: "very different they are. If you recollect you both requested they might be so."<sup>41</sup> At another time she brought them up to date: "It is the fashion now in Philadelphia to wear the cravat tied, and without a bow. The ladies too must be stuck up with cravats. . . . Rather be out of the world than out of fashion."<sup>42</sup>

At length Henry's college career came to an end. He was graduated in the fall of 1797, after spending—together with George, who now left college without being graduated—over two years at Dickinson. In this time he had made only one visit home, in the spring of 1796.

But Henry did not remain idle long following his graduation. After the beginning of the new year, 1798, he set off for Lancaster, to study law with his first cousin, Charles Smith, son of Dr. William Smith. Charles Smith promised to take him with-

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>41</sup> Ridgely, 94.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.



out fee and to place a large law library and a good private library at his disposal.<sup>43</sup>

Henry went to Lancaster full of serious intentions. He was, as his mother had said, always sufficiently studious, but there was a light, social side to his character. As his trunks passed through Wilmington from Carlisle, he had a friend slip *The Secular Romance* and *Count Roderic's Castle* into them.<sup>44</sup> When he told the same friend, Thomas Macomb, of his studious plans, Macomb was skeptical: "Don't tell anybody," he wrote Henry, "but I believe you are a d——l of a Lyar when you say that you will not visit a girl in Lancaster, because I know you are too fond of them to leave off visiting them."<sup>45</sup> Another college friend feared Henry would be "out of his element" among the unsociable Lancastrian ladies.<sup>46</sup>

Henry stayed at his legal studies in Lancaster from January to August of 1798. His attention to them was such that he won the approbation of his preceptor's father-in-law, Jasper Yeates, as "a studious, sober, young man."<sup>47</sup> But as the country in these months came close to war with France, the ardently patriotic and anti-French sympathies of his family and his friends disturbed his work and made him think of abandoning it to join the army.

Letters from his sisters were especially unsettling. "Wou[l]d to Heavn I was a Man," Mary wrote, "or that it was customary for the female World to shoulder a musket and march in defense of their Country. You my dear Brother I am sure will be amongst the first to rally round the Standard of Liberty. . . . I wish you were in the company of Grenadiers of Philadelphia. There is not to be a man under five feet ten in the company. . . . Have you

<sup>43</sup> Henry to Mrs. Ann Ridgely, Lancaster, Jan. 3, 1798, *ibid.*, 112–113.

<sup>44</sup> *Calendar*, I, 306.

<sup>45</sup> Ridgely, 111.

<sup>46</sup> *Calendar*, I, 307. The friend was Alexander Lyon.

<sup>47</sup> Mary to Henry Ridgely, Phila., March 19, 1798, Ridgely, 115.

### "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

seen the President's answer to the young men of Boston? He says, 'to Arms—to Arms my young friends.' . . . Mama has given you Liberty to do whatever you think proper in the Bustle. . . . I know your Temper too well to suppose you will be inactive at this time."<sup>48</sup>

But when Henry wrote home that he wanted to enter the Army, Mrs. Ridgely's advice was quite different; she pointed to President Adams' answer, not to the young men of Boston, but to the young men of Dartmouth College. He should not break off his studies now when he was in the habit of them, when he was but eighteen, when he had just begun the study of a profession he had "invariably avow'd" it was his "choice to pursue." He should not think of joining the Army as an officer while totally ignorant even of the duties of a common soldier. Continue at law, she advised, but begin to study soldering, so that if your services are needed you can be useful.<sup>49</sup>

This sober wisdom Henry accepted. He joined Captain Mosher's volunteer company in Lancaster while continuing his studies.<sup>50</sup> But in a month he left Lancaster, returned home to Dover, and took up his law studies with his half-brother Nicholas. After four years of legal study, exactly the length of time his mother had once suggested, he was admitted to the Delaware bar.

### III

The year in which he was admitted to the bar, 1802, was a critical one for Henry Ridgely in quite another way, too: it marked the beginning of his courtship of Sarah Banning. This courtship, like Henry's decision to continue his study of law,

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<sup>48</sup> Ridgely, 125–126.

<sup>49</sup> June 26, 1798, *ibid.*, 127–128.

<sup>50</sup> Henry to Mrs. Ann Ridgely, Lancaster, July 16, 1798, *Calendar*, I, 181.



must have given his mother great happiness. When Sarah Banning was only twelve she had won Mrs. Ridgely's favor. "Very pretty . . . well behaved and sensible," Mrs. Ridgely had then termed her, "the best behav'd little girl this neighborhood ever had to boast of."<sup>51</sup> Henry's sisters seem to have been as fond of Sally as their mother was.

But Henry had a prior engagement, one that had begun in his college days, when he was studying languages and mathematics and gracious manners in Carlisle. The girl of this engagement was one Elizabeth Wilson, "your charming black-eyed Bess," as a schoolmate called her.<sup>52</sup> For five years following his departure from Carlisle, Henry's friends teased him about this attachment. Finally, however, in May, 1802, it was completely broken after Henry had visited Betsy in Baltimore, where she had moved from Carlisle.<sup>53</sup>

By September of 1802 Henry was in love with Sally Banning, who was then only fifteen years old.<sup>54</sup> In spite of his ardor, she delayed marriage for more than a year, till the fall of 1803. In the meantime Henry had fought a duel and been wounded. It was rather a strange affair, this duel, for Henry was not a party to the quarrel with which it began. He delivered a challenge for a friend; the challenge was declined, but somehow Henry was challenged, perhaps for his manner of participation. He and his adversary, William Shields, fought with pistols, and Henry was wounded. The Ridgely girls were agog with excitement and pride in their brother, but Mrs. Ridgely disapproved his action, though not quite so vigorously as the family expected.<sup>55</sup>

Married and engaged in the law, Henry settled down in the

<sup>51</sup> *Calendar*, I, 177.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander Lyon to Henry Ridgely, Carlisle, July 1, 1800, *ibid.*, 323.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Ridgely to Elizabeth Wilson, June, 1803, *Calendar*, II, 102.

<sup>54</sup> Henry Ridgely to Sarah Banning, Dover, Sept. 4, 1802, Ridgely, 304-305.

<sup>55</sup> Ridgely, 297-299.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Ridgely house on Dover Green to lead the life of usefulness for which his mother had trained him. His law practice prospered from the first. This was due to his good fortune as well as to his ability, for he was able to take over the practice of Nicholas, his half-brother, who became chancellor of Delaware at just this time. Henry was immediately retained by John Dickinson,<sup>56</sup> and in the following years he became attorney for John's brother Philemon and for such prominent Delawareans as Senator Samuel White, Allen McLane, and Eleuthère Irénée du Pont.<sup>57</sup>

Still another career opened for him in 1807, when he was chosen the first president of the Farmers Bank. This was, and is, the official bank of the State of Delaware. The majority of its stock was purchased by the state, but the state chose only a minority of the directors. Branches were set up in each county seat, but the main office was established in Dover, and there, for the next forty years, to the very year of his death, Henry Ridgely presided over its affairs.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time that Henry Ridgely entered banking, he was entering politics, for in October, 1807, he won the first of six elections to the lower house of the state legislature, called in Delaware the General Assembly. Of his political party there could be no doubt; it was foreordained he should be a Federalist. This was the party which had in Kent County inherited the political organization that his father had once led. This was the party of his mother's adherence. It was the party of his closest friends at college. It was, of course, the likely party for a pupil of Dr. Nisbet. It was the party of Henry's relatives in Philadelphia and of his closest associates in Delaware. It was the party of his legal precep-

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<sup>56</sup> *Calendar*, II, 98.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 107, 115, 193; E. I. du Pont to Vaughan & Dahlgren, Aug. 24, 1818, B. G. du Pont, *Life of E. I. du Pont* (Newark, Del., 1923-1926), X, 302.

<sup>58</sup> Henry C. Conrad, *History of Delaware* (Wilmington, 1908), II, 640-641.



tors, Charles Smith in Lancaster and Nicholas Ridgely in Dover. It was the party which would bring Henry Ridgely to political prominence in Delaware, and when this party died, his political prominence came to an end.

But its history in Delaware was a long one, far longer than in any other state. Rooted in the agricultural yeomanry of Kent and Sussex counties, it controlled two-thirds of Delaware, and it won State-wide elections with almost unbroken regularity until the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century.

After re-election to the General Assembly of Delaware in 1808 and 1809, Henry Ridgely became the Federalist candidate for the United States House of Representatives in 1810. At the time, Federalist rule seemed dangerously challenged. New Castle County had swung over to the opposition, which had used its preponderant strength there to contest all state elections. In 1807 this opposition had prevailed on the aged John Dickinson to run for United States Representative and thus lend his name and popularity to the support of the Democratic-Republicans, the party of Jefferson and Madison. Dickinson was narrowly defeated, but a schism among the Kent Federalists gave the opposition new hope. In 1810 the Federalists lost the governorship. Yet Henry Ridgely was victorious in his Congressional contest and went off to Washington, leaving Sally and a steadily enlarging family behind him.

His success in the close election of 1810 assured him of re-nomination in 1812. Again he won, and thus he served in both of the Congresses that sat through the War of 1812. But these election victories did not bring unalloyed happiness to Henry Ridgely. To be a Federalist in Congress in those days was to be a member of an all but hopeless minority that could protest but not prevent what it deemed to be the beginning of an unnecessary



war. Once begun, the incompetent direction of the war seemed beyond the power of the Federalists to improve. Like a good Federalist, Henry Ridgely voted against the war, against embargoes, against cheap money, and in favor of a strong navy, of a national bank, and—this alone surprising—of the admission of new states.

Washington itself was a raw shell of a city that offered few inducements to Ridgely.<sup>59</sup> He did enjoy the companionship of the group of Congressmen who boarded with him, of such men as Harmanus Bleecker, of New York, and the famous John Randolph of Roanoke, who became his good friend. But he missed his attractive young wife, and his children. Finally in the winter of 1813–1814, having decided not to run again for election, he brought Sally to Washington. Twelve dollars a week he paid for each of them and four dollars for each servant at Mrs. Wadsworth's house.<sup>60</sup> Presumably this was a more pleasant season than those past, but since Sally was with him there was no need for the letters that might tell us details of his life. John Randolph, we know, sent him six twists of prime chewing tobacco via Chief Justice Marshall,<sup>61</sup> but we know little more, except of the children, who were home in Dover under his sister's care.

These children—in time there were to be fifteen, of whom seven died in infancy—occupied Henry Ridgely's attention much as he and his brother and sisters had occupied his mother's attention. He bought them presents, he noted their birthdays, he corrected their spelling, he directed their reading, as when he told his oldest son to study the map of Louisiana so he might understand the New Orleans campaign.<sup>62</sup> He prescribed for their health (a leather bag filled with camphor and tied around the

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<sup>59</sup> *Calendar*, II, 139.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 196, 198.



throat with a black ribbon might be a protection against sore throat and infection), and for their domestic happiness (many a wife, he told his daughter Ann, has lost a good husband through extravagance).<sup>63</sup>

In his final session in the House, he was alone again, now in a Washington marked by the ruins of British invasion, a city of "no amusement, no society." For a while he enjoyed games of chess in the evening, but in time they lost their relish.<sup>64</sup> But news of the victory at New Orleans roused his patriotism and cheered him, and he greeted news of the Peace of Ghent, which his Federalist friend James Bayard had helped to negotiate, with the judgment, very moderate, considering his party, that the war had done us no harm. He was apparently quite unsympathetic with the New England Federalists who participated in the Hartford Convention.<sup>65</sup>

Leaving Congress in 1815, he again won election to the legislature. In 1817 he became secretary of state for Delaware, and he served in that exacting position under three governors for six of the following nine years. During these years he undertook several services to historical scholarship. He attempted to found a state archives by renting a room, on his own responsibility, as a depository for official state records.<sup>66</sup> He sent copies of the laws of Delaware to the American Antiquarian Society.<sup>67</sup> He aided Jared Sparks, the historian, who made a brief visit to Dover.<sup>68</sup> Later he prepared a biographical sketch of Chancellor Nicholas Ridgely for the *American Encyclopedia*.<sup>69</sup>

Like some other leading Federalists in Delaware, Ridgely became, in the mid-1820's, a supporter of Andrew Jackson. This

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 197, 234.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 199, 204.

<sup>66</sup> *Delaware Senate Journal*, 1818, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 1820, p. 102.

<sup>68</sup> *Calendar*, II, 220.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

juncture with the Jackson forces was probably a marriage of convenience in the beginning rather than a love match. The Federalist party had ceased to exist on a national scale after 1816, and had indeed retained strength as a state party only in Delaware. The lack of any national Federalist party left the Delaware Federalists free to choose among various factions of the Democratic-Republicans or to remain outside of national politics altogether. Ridgely, Louis McLane, and a few others attached themselves to the Jackson forces in 1826.

Although in the light of subsequent events this choice may seem odd, it was not strange in 1826. Jackson's victory at New Orleans was one notable victory amid the long series of bungled campaigns of the War of 1812. Later, Jackson had publicly counseled President Monroe to adopt a nonpartisan policy and accept Federalists on equal terms with Democrats. Such a man, with a wide popular following, might restore Federalists to the seats of the mighty, where a previous military hero, Washington, had placed them through the popularity of his name.

Moreover, Jackson's opponent, John Quincy Adams, was a renegade Federalist in the view of many members of the old party, and a man who had supported and retained in office the civil servants he inherited from Monroe. There were no loaves and fishes of patronage to be gained under Adams. His policies were known and were not likely to be changed. Under Jackson, on the other hand, who could say what might happen? A new Federalist era might begin, even though the banners were changed. Washington too had spoken of nonpartisan administration, and the Federalists looked back on his day with longing.

By chance, two Senate seats from Delaware fell vacant in 1827, and to them Louis McLane and Henry Ridgely secured



their election: McLane for a full term, Ridgely for a short term. In Washington the news was greeted with fanfare by the Jackson forces; McLane and Ridgely were clearly understood to be Jackson men, and their election gave the Jacksonites control of the Senate.<sup>70</sup>

At home in Delaware, McLane and Ridgely went to work quickly to make their triumph permanent, to secure state dominance for their followers, and to carry the state for Jackson in 1828. A manifesto published over Henry Ridgely's name in 1827 proclaimed the new order of things: "Fellow Citizens!—A new era in the politics of the country has arrived. The terms 'Federalist' and 'Democrat' can NO LONGER be the watchwords of party. Under the banner of Jackson or of Adams every man must now either directly or indirectly array himself."<sup>71</sup>

And so it was. Two new parties arose in Delaware, an Adams party and a Jackson party. The old parties were shuffled and disappeared. Federalists and Republicans were no more. Politicians broke old ties and made new ones. And lo! when the shuffling was done, all was as before. A new party that would be called Whig had appeared and controlled Kent and Sussex counties and with them the state. It based its strength on the same voters and almost the same principles as the old Federalist party. But it was the party of John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, and Henry Ridgely and Louis McLane were not of it. Their party, the Jackson party, was the new minority party in Delaware. In a vain effort to carry the state for Jackson they had exchanged the majority for the minority. Consequently Ridgely lost his Senate seat

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<sup>70</sup> Louis McLane to James A. Bayard, Washington, Jan. 18, 1827, Hilles Collection (in private possession, photostats in Memorial Library, University of Delaware).

<sup>71</sup> Dover *Political Primer*, April 21, 1828.

at the end of his term in 1829. He ran for Congress in 1830 but was defeated by the new majority.

To make matters worse, both Ridgely and McLane soon became dissatisfied with Jackson. His administration did not turn out to be at all what they had hoped. This disappointment signaled Ridgely's withdrawal from national politics. He remained a nominal Democrat, but hereafter he gradually withdrew from partisan activity.<sup>72</sup>

#### IV

And so Henry Ridgely settled into the quiet finale of his life. After Sally Banning, the bride of his youth, died, and after Ann, his favorite daughter, was married to Charles I. du Pont, Henry Ridgely was married again, to Ruhamah Comegys, daughter of an old associate in the Farmers Bank.

Though high offices and prominent national positions were his no more, his usefulness to society did not yet cease. "His object as a public man," a newspaper obituary was to declare, "was not the vanity of personal distinction; his ambition was to be useful, to do his duty faithfully and render good service to the country."<sup>73</sup> He became a Trustee of the Newark Academy and of the Newark College that was constructed upon it. He watched over his expanding family, his law practice, and his bank. He became a town commissioner of Dover. And for his county of Kent he served as trustee of the poor, as registrar of wills, as recorder of deeds, as commissioner of the levy court.

It was in 1847, exactly on his sixty-eighth birthday, that the life of Henry Moore Ridgely, cultured son of Delaware and Dickinson, came to its end. "His ambition was to be useful," the newspaper eulogy read. His mother would have approved.

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<sup>72</sup> *Calendar*, II, 250.

<sup>73</sup> *Delaware Gazette*, Aug. 13, 1847.



## JAMES BUCHANAN AT DICKINSON\*



*Philip Shriver Klein*

NOT many generations ago on the campus where we are now gathered, there resounded the voices of those college students we are going to talk about tonight. Dr. Robert Davidson, President of Dickinson College in 1807, would possibly disapprove of devoting such a distinguished occasion as this to a study of the particular student in whom we are interested; yet even he would no doubt have appreciated knowing more about this young man whose proficiency in class exercises was exceeded only by his talent for exasperating the faculty.

We may begin this story, for want of a better place, in August 1807, on the quiet veranda of the Reverend Doctor John King's home, overlooking the roof-tops of the little village of Mercersburg and commanding a distant view of the Tuscarora Mountain to the west. After peacefully enjoying the summer evening landscape, the good Doctor was at length aroused by the sound of a horse pacing slowly up the Chambersburg road. Guessing that the rider would be Squire James Buchanan on his way from Dunwoodie farm to his home in Mercersburg, Dr. King got up and walked around to the side gate.

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\* Dr. Klein is Chairman of the Department of History at the Pennsylvania State University, and is preparing a definitive biography of James Buchanan. The Lecture was delivered on February 18, 1955.

"Good evening, Squire," he hailed. "Can you come in to talk for a few minutes?"

"Of course. Gladly," answered Buchanan, dismounting and tying his horse to the gate post. No one could fail to observe the contrast between the two men as they walked towards the house. Dr. King, Presbyterian pastor at Mercersburg and a leading Trustee of Dickinson College, was tall, slender and handsome, with features which radiated kindness and interest in his fellows. His hair was a patriarchal white, but his eyes twinkled with youth and good humor. He was a fine scholar, but so unaffected, witty, and human that no one talking with him casually would have sensed his erudition.

Squire James Buchanan, one of the leading businessmen of the Mercersburg region, was as tall as his companion, but more florid and portly. His watery blue eyes suggested more of caniness than of kindness; his features were heavy, his countenance bluff and hearty. He conveyed at once a hint of animal force guided by wariness and suspicion of his fellows. While middle age and business success were softening him, he still appeared a man of energy and unsatisfied ambition.

"I want to talk to you about your son, Jimmie," said Dr. King. "I think he ought to go to college."

Today, such a remark would sound casual indeed. In 1807 it was otherwise. Going to college has lately come to be so routine a matter in America that neither teacher nor pupil gives very much thought to the most amazing part of the whole process—namely, that anyone should take it for granted. The parent, then and now, is usually the person most keenly aware that sending children to college is anything but routine. And so it was with Squire Buchanan.



Any American father in 1800 who even talked about sending a son to college was already a marked man, for of the five million inhabitants of the nation scarcely 2000 were college students, and less than a hundred scholars devoted themselves to college teaching. Among three-fourths of a million Pennsylvanians in 1800 there were only a dozen college professors and under 200 students. No, it was not a routine matter for an immigrant storekeeper in a backwoods Pennsylvania valley to think of sending his son into such an exclusive society. Dr. King knew this as well as Squire Buchanan; that is why he wanted a quiet chat that August day of 1807. It was, of course, obvious what college was meant—Dickinson.

Dr. King was well acquainted with sixteen-year-old Jimmie Buchanan. To begin with, he had baptized him. Later one of Dr. King's ministerial students became young Buchanan's teacher at the Old Stone Academy in Mercersburg and gave a good report of his work in Greek and Latin. More recently Buchanan's teacher had been Jesse Magaw, a Dickinson graduate of 1806, who found his pupil studious and perceptive. Dr. King saw in Jimmie Buchanan a dual prospect: the development of a keen young mind, and the addition of a cash customer to the sorely depleted student rolls of the college.

While the elder Buchanan really needed the services of his eldest son in business and around the farm, he was sufficiently farsighted to ponder his pastor's suggestion. From his own limited experience, he knew the advantages of education. Now he was becoming concerned about the future security of his growing family. In addition to Jimmie, he had four small daughters and a baby boy, and another child was on the way. He was past middle age. If he should die or suffer a setback in his business, his own children might face the same unhappy situation in which he had



been reared; they might have to be distributed around among those who could provide for them.

But if James could become established in a profession, he would be able in a few years to care for the family. While Mrs. Buchanan would have been happy to see her son enter the ministry, the Squire knew better what pursuit would fit the requirements. Money could be made in buying and selling property, but in these days of embargoes and political judges one needed a lawyer to protect it. The Squire wanted his son to prepare for the law; in this profession he would be equipped both to manage his patrimony wisely, and to assure an income for himself.

The decision was soon made, arrangements were completed to enroll James in the junior class of the college, and on a sparkling morning of September, 1807, the young man and his father saddled their horses for the trip to Carlisle. A group of young people gathered round the house to see them off with good wishes, but further down the street near the end of the village an old woman ran out into the road screeching her warning that Mr. Buchanan was carrying his son straight to perdition.<sup>1</sup>

Dickinson College when Buchanan enrolled there was slowly rallying from a series of early misfortunes. After twenty years of effort the Trustees by 1802 had finally been able to provide the college with "a new and elegant building." Scarcely six weeks after the dedication, someone carelessly left a scuttleful of hot ashes in the cellar. On any day of the year except that particular one, nothing more would have happened, but on that Thursday morning of February a violent blizzard descended on Carlisle. Gusts of wind eddied into the cellar of the college hall, picked up a few glowing embers and dropped them on a pile of shavings. In an hour the new building was reduced to a smoking

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Appel, *Recollections of College Life*, Reading, Pa., 1888, pp. 56-59.



black hole in the ground, a pitiful void in the snow-white campus lot.

The following year Dr. Charles Nisbet, who had been headmaster of the college since its inception and had supplied most of the initiative and courage for its development, died. The Trustees then decided to take upon themselves the responsibility for management, assigning to one of the faculty, Dr. Robert Davidson, the post of acting president. As his powers were poorly defined and his personality unsuited to his task, relations between the students, the faculty, and the Trustees deteriorated during his administration, from 1804 to 1809.

But the town of Carlisle posed the main problem. While the college assured parents that the community was temperate and frugal and that students, "removed from all temptations to dissipation and extravagance," could pay tuition and support for \$140 a year,<sup>2</sup> local observers described a different state of affairs. Jeremiah Atwater reported that the pleasures "of high life, of parade, of the table & ball chamber" appeared to be the main object of life. "Drunkenness, swearing, lewdness & duelling seemed to court the day." The students were "indulging in the dissipation of the town, none of them living in the college." It was folly, concluded this gentleman, "to expect that a college could flourish without a different state of things in the town"; and in a final burst of outrage he exclaimed, "I hope that as God has visited other states, he will *yet visit Pennsylvania*."<sup>3</sup>

These were the conditions to which James Buchanan referred when he wrote of Dickinson, many years later, that the college was "in wretched condition" while he was a student there. When

<sup>2</sup> Carlisle Herald, Oct. 13, 1809.

<sup>3</sup> James H. Morgan, *Dickinson College: The History of One Hundred and Fifty Years, 1783-1933*, Carlisle, Pa., Dickinson College, 1933, p. 183. Atwater to Benjamin Rush, April 22, 1810; Atwater to Rev. Ashbel Green, May 11, 1810, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Buchanan arrived in Carlisle in 1807, a new college building designed by Benjamin Latrobe had been almost completed and classes were being held in it, though no student rooms were ready for occupancy nor would they be during Buchanan's student days.<sup>4</sup>

Left on his own for the first time in his life, Jimmie Buchanan began to canvass his prospects in this enticing environment. Of the forty-two students enrolled, eight were seniors, nineteen were his mates in the junior class—all of them Pennsylvanians but two, and the remaining fifteen were freshmen or assigned to the Latin School. The college program did not yet include the sophomore year.

His courses, he discovered, would probably include Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Geography, Logic, History, Literature, and Philosophy. President Davidson would be his teacher in History, Geography, and Philosophy; Professor John Hayes would be in charge of Languages, and Professor McCormick of Mathematics. These three comprised the entire teaching staff and the administration as well.

Teachers often stamp upon the student mind a more vivid and lasting impression of their own personality than they do of their subject matter. Dr. Davidson was a teacher whom the students remembered with discomfort during their college days, but with sentimental attachment thereafter. He had written a geography text in very poor verse, required the students to buy it, and demanded that they memorize and recite from it verbatim. Failure in this assignment displeased him greatly. The introductory page of this little book contained an acrostic on the letters of Dr. Davidson's own name which everyone had to commit to memory. It was the good Doctor's vanity of the acrostic which

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.



amused the boys and induced them to compose the most irreverent parodies of it and repeat them in all manner of derisive ways.<sup>5</sup>

Though a pedagogue in school and out, formal, solemn, and precise, Dr. Davidson was a kind and gentle man. He never liked to take a strong stand, much less to translate it into action, and in dealing with administrative problems always tried to avoid solutions by the exercise of authority. Whenever possible, he took the line of least resistance, seeking to settle problems by a peaceful meeting of minds, without unpleasantness. In town and on the campus he was known by the appropriate nickname of "Blessed Peacemaker." Such was the man who, within the year, was to burn an impression on James Buchanan's callow mind as with a red-hot poker.

Professor Hayes, the language teacher, who had just come to the institution and was to retire from its staff in 1809, appears to have left little impression upon the memory of his pupils or his colleagues.

It was Professor James McCormick who was the favorite of the students. For years he had lodged and boarded half a dozen or so of them at his home. One boy recalled that "Mr. McCormick and his wife were as kind to us as if they had been our parents. He was unwearied in his attentions to us in our studies, full of patience and good nature, and sometimes seemed quite distressed when, upon examining a pupil, he found him not quite as learned as he was himself."<sup>6</sup>

Buchanan at first took his work as a student very seriously, spending most of his time in preparation and trying his best to make a good impression in the classroom. But it did not take him long to find that the life of a grind was no passport to comrade-

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 170-171. Roger B. Taney's recollections.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

ship among his classmates. To the contrary, he found that "to be a sober, plodding, industrious youth was to incur the ridicule of the mass of the students." Finding that he had little difficulty in keeping up his class assignments, he began to participate more freely in the extra-curricular activities of the day. "Without much natural tendency to become dissipated," he wrote, "and chiefly from the example of others, and in order to be considered a clever and spirited youth, I engaged in every sort of extravagance and mischief."<sup>7</sup>

From our knowledge of Jimmie's childhood and the habits of his later life, we may conjecture some of his college exploits. We may recall, for instance, that until his fourteenth year he had been the only boy in a family with four younger sisters. He had been more than ordinarily indulged by his parents from the very beginning because an infant sister had died at the time of his birth, leaving him for some years the only child. The boy had become accustomed at home and around Mercersburg to occupy a place of leadership and privilege; he strove to achieve a similar position among his Dickinson friends by whatever means seemed best suited to the end.

We may reasonably assume that he was as determined to excel in play as in work; that he got into drinking bouts sufficiently rowdy to come to the attention of the faculty; that he made the thrilling discovery that he was attractive to sundry young ladies of the town—a consummation of hope on which he sought frequent reassurance; that he smoked cigars contrary to the regulations of the college; and that he manifested in and out of the classroom an adolescent ego which proved at first irritating and at length intolerable to his professors. Occasionally there was a general student jamboree, such as the annual Carlisle Fair in

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<sup>7</sup> John B. Moore (ed.), *The Works of James Buchanan*, XII, 291.



May,<sup>8</sup> or the Fourth of July which the Dickinson boys usually celebrated by a huge dinner at the Glebe Farm. At the 1808 observance of the Glorious Fourth they downed sixteen regular toasts before starting on the volunteers.<sup>9</sup>

Despite all the distractions, self-willed and other, Buchanan kept up his class work, passed his public examinations in August, and concluded his first year of college with an excellent academic record. He returned to Mercersburg in the autumn of 1808, quite satisfied with himself and ready to go back to school in a few weeks as a senior. On a lovely Sunday morning of September he was lounging at ease in the sitting-room of his home, enjoying those deliciously languorous sensations of well-being that the gods confer only upon college students on vacation. His reverie was interrupted by a knock at the door which his father answered, returning shortly with a letter, which he tore open with curious interest. As he began to read, young James saw his expression change to pain and anger. Whatever this was, it was uncommonly bad news. Buchanan senior abruptly thrust the paper at his son, turned, and left the room without a word.

James looked down at the cause of this sudden shattering of his thoughts. As he began to read he felt a spider-like crawling at the roots of his hair and a nauseating clamminess in his hands. The letter, in Dr. Davidson's writing, said in clear English that Buchanan was expelled from Dickinson College for disorderly conduct. He read it again to get it all. Dr. Davidson was telling the elder Buchanan that his son would have been dismissed earlier except for the respect which the faculty entertained for the father. They had tolerated young James to the very limit of endurance, and would not have him back under any circumstances.

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<sup>8</sup> *Carlisle Herald*, May 19, 1809.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1808.



James was thunderstruck. Knowing that it would be useless to take up the matter with his irate father, he turned for advice to his friend, Reverend King, who had just become President of the Board of Trustees of the college. "He gave me a gentle lecture," said Buchanan of the interview. "He then proposed to me, that if I would pledge on my honor to him to behave better at college than I had done, he felt such confidence in me that he would pledge himself to Dr. Davidson on my behalf, and he did not doubt that I would be permitted to return."<sup>10</sup>

One cannot help wondering exactly what underlay this letter from Dr. Davidson, and whether it was not a case of friendly collusion among the principals. Dr. King had presided at the September meeting of the Board of Trustees in Carlisle, had talked with Dr. Davidson, and had listened to a letter from the faculty, praying that the committee of the Board which had charge of student discipline should "give the faculty all the aid in their power for maintaining good order."<sup>11</sup> Dr. Davidson made the problem of student conduct the main theme of his commencement address the same week, referring to "young men of an intractable spirit . . . who have despised the salutary restraints of authority and discipline."<sup>12</sup> Finally, it was a matter of record that Dr. Davidson had no authority to discipline students by expulsion; the College Charter itself required that such action should be taken directly by the Board.<sup>13</sup>

While the Board Minutes disclose no discussion of Buchanan's case, it is impossible to believe that Reverend King, who attended all of the Board meetings during this year, did not know in advance that his neighbor and protégé from Mercersburg was get-

<sup>10</sup> John B. Moore (ed.), *The Works of James Buchanan*, XII, 292.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees, I, 348-349, Sept. 28, 1808, Dickinson College Library.

<sup>12</sup> *Carlisle Herald*, Oct. 5, 1808.

<sup>13</sup> Morgan, *Dickinson College*, 196.



ting into serious trouble. It is more likely that Dr. Davidson's action was approved in advance by the Board, or may have originated there, as a means of bracing up the lad by a sound scare which would both tame his spirit and at the same time exert a sobering influence upon the rest of the students. Otherwise it is difficult to explain why Reverend King would so casually reverse the action of President Davidson without so much as consulting anyone about the matter.

Chastened in spirit and with the resolution to be more circumspect in his conduct, Buchanan returned to Dickinson for the winter term. Unfortunately, his strenuous application to work had the result of further inflating his intellectual vanity—the trait which had been the root of his difficulty in the first place. Take, for example, the problem in navigation which he prepared for Professor McCormick, requiring the construction of an imaginary ship's journal in which the exact latitude and longitude of the point of destination were to be determined from the daily sailing data. Buchanan chose for his journal a trip from Boston to Madeira, an island which he had frequently visited in fancy while quaffing its amber produce in the taverns of Carlisle. After some thirty pages of careful notations of traverse tables, estimates of drift, and calculations of magnetic variation and deviation, he found that his final figures on the location of the western tip of Madeira varied by only one mile from the values given on the printed geographical charts. The concluding sentence in this problem illustrates perfectly the mental attitude of the boy. "I therefore conclude," he wrote, "that my journal was nearly exact, and that the latitude and longitude of that part of Madeira were well laid down."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Buchanan's mathematics workbook, in the Dickinsoniana Collection. The other volume of this is on display in the library at Wheatland, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

All too soon the year was over. On September 25, 1809, the faculty presented to the Board of Trustees the names of fifteen young gentlemen whom they certified "as prepared to receive their Bachelor's degree, they having gone through the usual courses, and been publicly examined in the Languages and Sciences." Buchanan's name was on the list.

In the meantime, trouble had been brewing over the award of senior honors. The students were divided between two literary societies, the Belles Lettres and the Union Philosophical, which met weekly in rooms at opposite ends of the fourth floor of the college building. All the student competition of the day centered in these societies, for the prize was the award of first honors of the college. Each Society chose one candidate; the faculty chose the winner, and the other man automatically received the second honor. The award of first honors was not only a Society victory, but gave to the successful student the distinction of having first place on the program of senior orations at the commencement exercises.

The Union Philosophical Society, to which Buchanan belonged, unanimously chose him as their candidate for the first honor. But James was not satisfied with this. He thought that the Union Philosophical Society was so much superior to its rival that it should, this year, have both the first and the second honors. He therefore put through a motion that the Union P. should present two candidates, himself for first place, and Robert Laverty for the second.

This was too much for the faculty. They had observed some improvement in Jimmie's outward conduct, but none in his intellectual conceit, and they determined on this occasion to puncture it. They gave the first honor to the candidate of the Belles Lettres Society, second honor to Laverty, and rejected Buchanan entirely



on the ground that it would have a bad effect on the morale of the college to honor a student who had been so troublesome and had shown so little respect for the professors.

This announcement completely outraged the young man. He wrote an agitated letter to his father, complaining bitterly of the gross injustice and rank prejudice of the faculty. The first honor should go to the best scholar; he was the best scholar, as everyone knew and the record showed. He refused to believe the decision was final, and had his oration ready. With the simplicity of youth, he could not conceive how an acknowledged truth could be turned aside by a policy decision.

Father Buchanan replied with a masterful letter of condolence, full of sly innuendo. He had received James' letter, he wrote, "though without date" (inexcusable carelessness!) and was mortified that James would receive no honors, especially as this "was done by the professors who are acknowledged by the world to be the best judges of the students under their care." As to James' unflattering opinion of the faculty, the partiality he complained of proceeded, perhaps, "from some other cause" than he suggested. Mr. Buchanan hoped that his son had fortitude enough to take the decision like a man.<sup>15</sup> Young James read this over carefully several times, smarting with embarrassment at the parts which showed so clearly that his father was quite familiar with his son's many shortcomings. But his temper subsided, and he turned to another polishing of his oration, very appropriately entitled, "The Utility of Philosophy."

In the meantime the Union Philosophical Society was in an uproar over the turn of events. They at once held a meeting at which Lavery withdrew as second honor man and offered the place to Buchanan. When he refused to consider this, the seniors

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<sup>15</sup> Sept. 6, 1809. G. T. Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan*, I, 6-7.



of the Society proposed that they all refuse to speak at commencement. Jimmie also opposed this because he did not wish others to become involved on his account. At length the faculty itself resolved the impasse by writing a kind letter to James, stating that he would be expected to present his oration, though not on the first place in the program.<sup>16</sup>

By Commencement Day, September 19, 1809, the air had cleared. Alfred Foster of Carlisle would deliver the Salutatory oration in Latin on "The Excellence of Knowledge," Buchanan would follow him on the program, and Lavery would deliver the Valedictory. As the bell of the Presbyterian Church began to ring, the academic procession marched slowly toward that edifice, where Dr. Davidson opened the exercises with prayer, and the newly elected President of the college, Dr. Jeremiah Atwater, delivered his inaugural address. Then the graduates presented their orations, upon such topics as "Liberty," "Ambition," "The Value of Time," "Friendship," "Happiness," "The Beauties of Nature," "Immortality," "The Utility of Latin and Greek Languages," and "The Advantages of Learning." Thereafter, two seniors edified the audience by a dialogue in blank verse complimentary to the faculty, the Trustees, the college, and all institutions of learning. Needless to say, Buchanan was not a participant in this gracious exercise. A unique feature of the occasion was the appearance on the program of four boys, all named Grier, all of them ministerial candidates, and two of them brothers. After the awarding of degrees, Dr. Davidson rose to make a pathetic farewell address to the graduates, and President Atwater closed the meeting.<sup>17</sup>

When he left Carlisle, Buchanan had no more idea than any other young alumnus what parts of his college experience would

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<sup>16</sup> John B. Moore (ed.), *The Works of James Buchanan*, XII, 293.

<sup>17</sup> *Carlisle Herald*, Sept. 29, 1809.



most affect his life. Within three months, however, he discovered something that he had doubtless not much considered while on campus. When he moved to Lancaster to begin the study of law in the office of James Hopkins, he found that to be an alumnus of a college established an immediate bond of acquaintance. His friend, Jasper Slaymaker, who had graduated in 1808, lived in Lancaster and was studying law. The son of Buchanan's preceptor, George Ross Hopkins, was just starting his course at Dickinson.

Little by little, the old school tie began to develop as a tangible thing. William Norris, one of Lancaster's best barristers, was a Dickinsonian. Wealthy Robert Coleman was a Dickinson Trustee. Buchanan soon started to court his daughter, Ann, with tragic consequences. The circle widened as the years progressed, bringing into the orbit of Buchanan's life other Dickinsonians: Isaac Wayne, Federalist Congressman; John Bannister Gibson, of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court; Alexander Hayes, President Judge of the Lancaster County Court; Calvin Blythe, Secretary of State and Attorney General of Pennsylvania; Ninian Edwards, of the United States Senate; Robert C. Grier and Roger B. Taney, of the United States Supreme Court, who participated in the Dred Scott Decision at the time of Buchanan's presidency; these were but a few of the men with whom Buchanan's acquaintance was enriched because of their Dickinson days.<sup>18</sup>

For nearly twenty years, Buchanan concerned himself little with affairs at Dickinson. In the mid 1820's however, the association was renewed through his youngest brother, Edward Y. Buchanan, who now became a student at Carlisle. Father Buchanan had died and James, the eldest of the family, acted as unofficial guardian for the others. It was a disappointment to him, no

<sup>18</sup> George F. Reed, *Alumni Record of Dickinson College*, Carlisle, 1905, passim.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

doubt, to learn that Edward had joined the Belles Lettres Literary Society rather than the Union P., but the sting was at least partially removed when the boys of Belles Lettres elected James Buchanan an honorary member in the spring of 1828.<sup>19</sup>

As Buchanan had by this time become a distinguished Congressman, the two literary societies extended him an invitation to speak before a joint meeting at the fall commencement.<sup>20</sup> He accepted partly from sentiment, partly for the sake of his brother Edward, and partly because it was politically advantageous.

It is interesting to observe how, in the summer and fall of 1828, Buchanan's interest in education suddenly flourished. He was then in the midst of the stiffest political battle of his life. Having been elected to Congress four times as a Federalist, he had now the problem of running again as a Jacksonian. As expansion of the schools was part of the Jacksonian program, Buchanan was determined to be found not wanting in support of it.

Thus we find him on the committee to found a Lancaster County Academy,<sup>21</sup> sending cash gifts to the Lititz Seminary, now Linden Hall,<sup>22</sup> toasting "Universal Education" at political rallies,<sup>23</sup> and promoting energetically the establishment of a common school system in Pennsylvania.<sup>24</sup> It was a deep disappointment to the Societies, after all their preparations, that Buchanan took sick shortly before the time of the scheduled oration and was unable to appear.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Minutes of Belles Lettres Society, April 5, 1828, Dickinson College Library.

<sup>20</sup> Lancaster *Journal*, May 2, 1828; *The Dickinsonian*, XXIV, #5, p. 209, February, 1897.

<sup>21</sup> Lancaster *Journal*, April 6, 1827.

<sup>22</sup> J. G. Krumrine to Buchanan, June 26, 1828. Buchanan MSS, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>23</sup> Lancaster *Journal*, August 8, 1828.

<sup>24</sup> Unidentified clipping, dated 1828, in Buchanan scrapbook in possession of John Lowry Ruth, York, Pennsylvania.

<sup>25</sup> Note of explanation on Commencement Program, September 24, 1828. Dickinsoniana Collection.



Buchanan won his seat in Congress, but retired from politics at the end of his term and shortly thereafter accepted an appointment as American Minister to Russia. During the long winter nights in St. Petersburg his thoughts sometimes drifted back in nostalgia to his college days in Carlisle. His financial agent in Lancaster wrote on one occasion of a note owing to him by William Irwin which was overdue. He remembered his classmate, Irwin, well. His had been the promise of a brilliant career; now he could not even make a living. What irony there was in the title of his commencement oration: "The Utility of the Latin and Greek Languages." Buchanan wrote back, "Poor Irwin was a school fellow of mine. I do not wish him pressed nor even written to again."<sup>26</sup>

After Buchanan returned to enter the United States Senate the affairs of Dickinson continued occasionally to claim his attention. In 1834 he became guardian for the son of his legal preceptor, eighteen-year-old William Hopkins, who was then a student at the college. For the next few years Buchanan conducted a lively correspondence with Reverend J. P. Durbin, President of Dickinson, with regard to the conduct of his ward who, apparently, was something of a disciplinary problem. Doubtless at Hopkins' suggestion, the Union Philosophical Society wrote to Buchanan again for the first time since their disappointment of 1828, and received in reply a gracious note enclosing a check for their library.<sup>27</sup>

The Trustees of Dickinson in 1842 awarded to Senator Buchanan the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. In thanking them, the Senator showed that he had learned at least one of the

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<sup>26</sup> Buchanan to John Reynolds, March 20, 1833. Reynolds MSS, Wheatland Foundation Collection in Fackenthal Library, Franklin and Marshall College.

<sup>27</sup> Buchanan to Durbin, December 4, 1835, and May 25, 1836. Dickinsoniana Collection.

lessons which his Alma Mater had tried to impress upon him, humility. "My sense of their personal kindness is greater," he wrote, "because I feel conscious that I do not deserve so distinguished a literary honor."<sup>28</sup>

In 1849, after four years service as Secretary of State, Mr. Buchanan returned to his newly purchased home, Wheatland, thinking that his diplomatic career, at least, had come to an end. In this he was quite mistaken. He arrived in Carlisle one evening in April, 1851, to find himself unexpectedly in the midst of a college dispute as entangled as an international *imbroglio*. The whole junior class, with one exception, had just been dismissed for absenting itself from recitations.

A local commentator observed that among those offering their services as mediator was that old "college lark," the Hon. James Buchanan. He did not justify the course of the students, "but endeavored [with an old bachelor's far-back memory of the wildness of youth, probably] to secure a mitigation of the punishment."<sup>29</sup>

What had happened was this. A Carlisle merchant who was very popular with the students, Jacob S. Faust, had just died. The students wished to attend his funeral. The professors in charge of the freshman class had given their assent to this, but the president refused to give such permission to the sophomores and juniors. Many students and townspeople attributed this to bigotry on the part of President Peck, because Faust was a Roman Catholic, but the professor stated merely that to excuse a class for a funeral would lead to "interminable interruptions in College duties."

Regardless of orders, the whole sophomore class, and all the

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<sup>28</sup> Buchanan to John McClintock, July 21, 1842. Dickinsoniana Collection.

<sup>29</sup> Carlisle *Herald*, April 16, 1851.



juniors but one absented themselves the day of Faust's funeral. The one junior went to class and received instruction and his advance assignment. The next morning the president summoned all the students, read a statement on the violation of college rules, and asked for a communication from the students as individuals or as a class. He also said he was inquiring who had attended the funeral, and who had merely cut for other diversions. This caused alarm among the students, who considered themselves all equally guilty, if guilty at all, and tended to sharpen their reply.

They then went to class where they were promptly examined, and all failed but the one boy who had been at class the previous day. The professor ordered the work to be made up, and his language, as a contemporary described it, "was certainly not calculated to allay the feelings of a band of young men already excited by preceding actions."<sup>30</sup>

In this state of mind, the juniors drew up resolutions:

Resolved: that we concede to the faculty the right to rule.

Resolved: that we believe all unlawful combinations to be subversive of the true aim and interest of the College, and that they should be sternly but properly rebuked by the executive.

Resolved: whether we intended to assume the excusing power on the 10th instant., we answer, NO!

Resolved: that we consider however, in this case, that *Justice* does not demand nor will we under any circumstances consent to make up, or apologize for such absence.

Resolved: that the fate of one be the fate of all.

Twenty-three members of the junior class signed this—all but the notable one exception.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, *American Democrat* (Carlisle), April 24, 1851.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

The faculty considered this reply to be offensive, and, despite the fact that a joint answer had been requested, labeled it the work of an unlawful combination. Each student was then summoned to appear individually before a faculty investigating committee which asked two questions: first, Do you concede that you did wrong in absenting yourself contrary to the express prohibition of the president? and second, Will you withdraw your name from your resolutions?

After undergoing this ordeal, the students compared notes and discovered they had interpreted the faculty questions in various ways. Fourteen, who thought the phrase "doing wrong" in the first question referred to their conscience, answered, "No," they did not feel they had done wrong. Nine others thought "wrong" referred to breach of college regulations, and they answered, "Yes," they had broken a college rule. On the basis of these answers, the faculty dismissed the 14 whose consciences were clear, but only suspended the other 9 who admitted wilfully breaking a college law.

The second question all the students refused to answer considering it to be a requirement by the faculty that they sacrifice their personal honor by repudiating an agreement made with their fellows.

At this juncture it was learned that Mr. Buchanan had arrived in Carlisle, and both faculty and students called on him with the request that he act as mediator. One can readily imagine with what satisfaction the distinguished diplomat, reflecting upon the tribulations of his own student days, assumed the role of Blessed Peacemaker. The formula he devised read as follows:

In my opinion the unfortunate difficulty between the faculty and the junior class of Dickinson College may be justly & honorably adjusted between them on the following terms:



JAMES BUCHANAN AT DICKINSON

- 1) The three first resolutions adopted by the junior class ought to satisfy the faculty to the extent to which they proceed.
- 2) The second question propounded by the faculty to the men of the junior class viz. ('Do you withdraw your names from the resolution of the junior class passed & subscribed on the 10th instant?') ought to be withdrawn & the gentlemen of the class ought not to be required to answer it.
- 3) The first question propounded viz. ('Do you conceive that you did wrong in taking the liberty which the president refused you?') ought to be answered in the affirmative by the members of the class as individuals.

The faculty, upon a distinct understanding that these terms will be acceded to by the members of the class, ought to rescind their resolutions of suspension & expulsion.<sup>31</sup>

The juniors agreed to this with the modification that all of their initial resolutions should remain valid. This the faculty accepted, and the newspapers which had been running stories under the headline "A Peck of Trouble at Dickinson" now carried the gratifying announcement: "Law and Order at Dickinson."<sup>32</sup> What was the fate of the junior who remained conspicuously out of all these proceedings must be left to the fancy of those who still recall their own college days.

The record shows little more of James Buchanan's relations with Dickinson. The last entry was made in the same room where young Jimmie Buchanan had so proudly delivered youthful orations sixty years before—in the hall of the Union Philosophical Society, in June, 1868. One of the students arose to read this preamble and resolutions:

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<sup>31</sup> Draft in Buchanan's handwriting, Buchanan Papers, Miscellaneous Section, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>32</sup> Carlisle *Herald*, April 23, 1851; *American Democrat*, April 24, 1851.



## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Whereas, the recent decease of Hon. James Buchanan, ex-President of the United States, calls for some token of respect from the Society of which he was a graduate member, and which, even amid the onerous duties of the highest public stations, he ever held in grateful remembrance as the theatre of his first literary successes, therefore be it:

*Resolved*, That the Society is proud of having given the country a statesman of such distinguished ability and scholarly attainments, as were those of our late brother.

*Resolved*, That we deeply lament the unfortunate circumstances which in his declining years exposed him to the cold criticism of the political world, while agitated by unusual calamities, and regret that he could not have lived until the public had time to recall the remembrance of his early and valuable services.

*Resolved*, That our Hall be draped with the usual emblems of mourning for the space of ninety days.

*Resolved*, That these resolutions be transmitted to the relatives of the deceased, and published in the papers of Carlisle and Lancaster.<sup>33</sup>

Buchanan wrote in his autobiography that he left college "feeling but little attachment towards the Alma Mater." Regardless of this, he could scarcely have denied that his two years at Dickinson left a lasting imprint upon his life. He learned respect for the law there, and learned it the hard way. Time was to come when President Buchanan was to admonish extremists both North and South in a nation torn by violence and passion: "We acknowledge no master but the law."<sup>34</sup>

He learned respect for property there, which he translated later into a veritable obsession for mathematical precision in all his business dealings, both public and private. This habit of

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<sup>33</sup> From unidentified clipping, in Buchanan scrapbook of John Lowry Ruth.

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum in Buchanan's hand, Cadwalader MSS, Buchanan Biography Section, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



scrupulous accuracy, down to the last penny, in any financial settlement regardless of its size became Buchanan's most universally recognized trade-mark—a habit which many quite erroneously viewed as parsimony.

He learned respect for religion there, in the form of a problem to be individually solved rather than a formal creed to be unquestioningly accepted. Throughout his life he grappled with this, questioning from time to time whether he was not in fact an atheist, but eventually arriving at convictions he had wrought out for himself which were acceptable to the Presbyterian Church.

Finally, one can readily see in Buchanan's later life the shadow of his Dickinson teachers. Professor McCormick certainly developed his initial love of figures, of neatness, and of orderly thinking. And while Buchanan probably ridiculed old Dr. Davidson as much or more than any of the students of his day, there was none whom he later came to resemble more. The description of Davidson could be applied nearly without change to Buchanan in maturity: vain, formal, solemn and precise; yet withal kindly and gentle, always trying to avoid solutions by force, to achieve them by a friendly meeting of minds, without unpleasantness. The Blessed Peacemaker. This was Buchanan's ideal of a statesman.

TRUCULENT THOMAS COOPER: FOE OF  
TYRANNY, FRIEND OF FREEDOM\*



*Harold A. Larrabee*

THOMAS COOPER was neither born in America nor educated at Dickinson College, but he was a bright star in its faculty for a brief period, and he played a significant part in American history, political, economic, scientific, and philosophical. He may rightfully be regarded as an illustrious example of that cross-fertilization of European with American culture which marked the earliest years of our republic. He led a picturesque, long, and stormy life on two continents: as an English radical sympathizer with the French Revolution in its beginnings; as a Jeffersonian partisan and judge in Pennsylvania before becoming professor of chemistry at Dickinson in 1811; and later as the highly-controversial President of the University of South Carolina, being sometimes characterized as responsible, more than any other single individual, for the coming of the Civil War.

In short, he was one of those almost incredibly versatile men of the Enlightenment like Franklin, Priestley, Benjamin Rush, and Thomas Jefferson (the last three his good friends); and his numerous careers offer themes enough, not only for one Spahr lecture, but a whole series of them: Cooper the chemist, the

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\* Dr. Larrabee is the Ichabod Spencer Professor of Philosophy at Union College. The lecture was delivered on February 29, 1952.



mineralogist, the inventor, the traveler, the gourmet, the editor, the political economist, the pamphleteer, the lawyer, the judge, the educator, the philosopher, and any number of others.

Yet I must confess that the first sentence relating to Cooper which I encountered in Dr. James Henry Morgan's history of Dickinson rocked me back upon my heels. It was: "His association with the College seems to have been unfortunate in all respects, despite his great ability."<sup>1</sup> That you should be willing to overcome your quite natural distaste for so fiery a troublemaker to the point of welcoming a lecturer about his "great ability" seems to me to display a remarkable magnanimity. One can, however, believe that Thomas Cooper was a great man (with many faults), and rejoice to honor his memory and his association with the college, without trying to prove that it was a good thing for Dickinson at that particular time.

For Thomas Cooper, as I have tried to indicate by the choice of the adjective "truculent," was what is sometimes called "a mover and shaker," a born "agitator" of humanity wherever he went. And so, wherever he went, trouble was sure to follow. He could not keep silent in his own interest, or out of mere discretion, when he believed that a vital principle was involved. He seems to have been incapable, even when he was victorious, of leaving well enough alone. As a result, there was rarely a dull moment in his life of eighty years, either for Cooper or for those about him.

"Truculent" means fierce, savage, even ferocious; and there was a streak of native ferocity in Cooper's nature which made him his own worst enemy when it came to provoking opposition. Remembering our own recent loss, as a nation, of a somewhat

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<sup>1</sup> James Henry Morgan, *Dickinson College: The History of One Hundred and Fifty Years, 1783-1933* (Carlisle, 1933), 187.



similarly belligerent public servant, Harold Ickes, we might say that Cooper was "the old curmudgeon" of his period: tart, caustic, a little too aware of his own rectitude, and full of fight when roused.

Yet the very ferocity of approach which kept him perpetually in hot water made him the doughty and effective champion of many good causes, as well as of a few mistaken ones. If there was a single cause which may be said to have been the dominant one throughout his long career as a controversialist, it was that of the freedom of the mind in inquiry—in implacable opposition to every kind of tyranny and censorship and oppression. In this devotion to freedom of thought, as he understood it, Cooper never wavered, no matter what the cost to himself in comfort, friendship, academic position, party loyalty, or worldly advancement.

While still quite young, he learned some of the costs of heresy in terms of personal unpopularity, even to the point of violence. Later he spent six months in a Philadelphia jail for exercising the right of freedom of the press in what he had supposed was "a free country," then cowering under the Alien and Sedition Acts. Not only do we owe to Cooper some of the freedoms which we now enjoy (and tend to take for granted); but we can also learn much from his example, namely—how endless is the struggle to keep the mind of man unfettered by vested orthodoxies, and how much easier it is to profess devotion to science than it is to practice the genuinely-disinterested scientific search for truth.

By birth Thomas Cooper was a Londoner, born in Westminster on October 22, 1759, the son of a landowner who was sufficiently affluent to send his son to Oxford, where young Thomas is said to have found the examinations easy. He did not, however, take a degree. Family tradition has it that, like Shelley,



he rebelled against the "pedantic despotism" of the university, and refused to sign the required Thirty-Nine Articles of the church. But somewhere along the way he gained at least two great assets from his formal education: a sound foundation in the classics, and, far less common in those days, a consuming interest in scientific experiments and their practical applications.

During the summer vacation of 1780 he attended a course of anatomical lectures, later a clinical course at the Middlesex Hospital, and even observed the dissection of horses at St. John's, Clerkenwell. This would indicate that he wanted to study medicine, but his father insisted upon the law, which he reluctantly pursued, without abandoning the more absorbing subjects of chemistry and anatomy.

In 1787 he became a barrister-at-law from the Inner Temple, and for the next three years he traveled the northern circuit including Lancashire. It was there that he encountered another unwilling young lawyer named James Boswell, described by Cooper in the latter's old age as "the greatest fool I ever saw. He was a real idiot. I am sure I have a right to say so."<sup>2</sup> Cooper went on to tell how he and some friends of his made Boswell the butt of a trumped-up case at the Lancashire assizes, which the presiding judge, tipped off in advance, found some pretext to postpone.

For several years, then, Cooper was nominally a barrister, although his real interests continued to lie elsewhere. It was acids against lawbooks, and the acids were victorious. Through his liking for chemistry, he became a member by investment and active participation in a firm of bleachers and calico-printers near Manchester, who were introducing in England the Berthollet process of bleaching with oxymuriatic acid made from common salt. In 1780, he had bettered his fortunes by marrying Alice

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<sup>2</sup> E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck, *Cyclopaedia of American Literature*, Vol. II, 333. "Memoranda of Table-Talk of Judge Cooper."



Greenwood, heiress to two estates, who was to bear him five children, and to accompany him to America. He seems at this period to have been a prosperous citizen, well abreast of the latest developments in science, launching upon a varied career in the rapidly developing industrial suburbs around the city of Manchester.

But Cooper's ideas were, even then, anything but ordinary or conventional in a community, Manchester, which was then noted for its conservatism. In 1783 he was elected a member, and soon a vice-president, of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, a group of enthusiasts for the new science who had elected to honorary membership such figures as Priestley, Lavoisier, Erasmus Darwin, Franklin, and Dr. Benjamin Rush. Most of the papers read before the society were on scientific or semi-scientific subjects. Cooper himself began with a pair on "The History of Physiognomy" and "The Art of Painting Among the Ancients." But on March 7, 1787, he presented "Propositions respecting the Foundation of Civil Government," in which he boldly defended what he called "the grand maxim, the very cornerstone of legitimate government, that all power is derived from the people."<sup>3</sup> In this and other early papers, Cooper had the audacity, two years before the publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, to show himself a radical follower of Milton, Harrington, Locke, and (above all) of that Dr. Joseph Priestley whom he had met some six years before and greatly admired, even though most of his friends, he conceded, held views "in perfect opposition" to such ideas.

Rarely will you find a purer example of the essential spirit of the Enlightenment than these early writings of Thomas Cooper.

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<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, Vol. III, 481-509.



Newton's amazing discoveries of scientific laws had given many of the educated class "an unreasonable confidence in reason," together with an optimism which expected the millenium as soon as the masses could be raised, by pamphlets and education, to their own high level of scientific sophistication. As Professor Herbert W. Schneider of Columbia has pointed out, the four main articles of the rationalistic faith of the 18th century were: "(1) the use of scientific method, (2) the hope of finding salvation in this world rather than in another, (3) the ideal of serving the common weal, and (4) the humanitarian zeal for the progress of all mankind."<sup>4</sup>

Young Cooper subscribed to all four beliefs, naïvely, dogmatically, and with a touching disinterestedness. "If my views be erroneous," he wrote, "I hope they will be proved so; for, attached as I may be to my own opinions, I hope and trust I am attached to TRUTH still more." His favorite motto, then and for many years, was "The truth is mighty and will prevail"; or, as he rephrased it in language worthy of Socrates himself, "Truth, whenever it be thoroughly discussed, will never fail to come like tried gold out of the fire; with Ajax, it requires nothing but daylight and fair play."<sup>5</sup> But it does require "daylight and fair play"—unlimited freedom of inquiry.

When Thomas Cooper, at the age of twenty-eight, began his public career by calling for freedom of inquiry in the footsteps of Milton's *Areopagitica*, Locke's *Letters on Toleration*, and the writings of Doctors Price and Priestley, he spoke in no uncertain terms: "I intend to maintain the RIGHT OF FREE DISCUSSION in its fullest extent, as applied to any and every question, opinion, tenet, or doctrine, political, theological, moral, meta-

<sup>4</sup> Herbert W. Schneider, "The Heritage of the Enlightenment," *Proceedings of the Humanities Institute*, University of Toledo, 1948, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Tracts, Ethical, Theological and Political*, xiv.

physical, or philosophical, within the widest range of human inquiry; and I trust that I shall shew that the cause of truth, and the interest of the public, require the free and full exercise of the right now claimed; and that in all times and all places, those who have been so anxious to throw fetters around the human intellect, have had no other motive for so doing, than to keep the persons and property of their fellow men, more completely within their own management and control."

An English bishop had said that some questions were to be approached "with humble prostration of the intellect." This assertion drew Cooper's scorn as a confession of weakness. Strong beliefs and strong institutions need not fear free inquiry. "No form of government," he wrote, "is a good one that will not bear investigation; no religion is worth supporting that needs any other support than its own intrinsic evidence." In sum, "Fraud and falsehood only dread investigation; truth invites it."

With an almost startling timeliness for our own day, Cooper makes the crucial distinction, which he hopes will become axiomatic, between men's *actions*, which are the proper province of the magistrate, and their *opinions*, which are not. Of opinions, he says, and we have not yet fully caught up with him, "Civil power has nothing to do with such matters. Speculative opinions are best left to fight out their harmless battles by means of a free press. They are never dangerous to the community but when the magistrate takes sides."<sup>6</sup>

Here speaks the champion of the complete freedom of thought of the individual, arrayed in eternal opposition to "the infamous and tyrannical interference of the civil power in matters of mere controversy." The great foe was absolutism, governmental and

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy*, 2nd ed., Appendix, "The Right of Free Discussion," 3-6.



ecclesiastical, in the realm of the mind. He grants that revolutions directed toward the overthrow of such unjust and undemocratic regimes are dangerous, but they are likely, in his opinion, to bring eventual advantages. "The structure of political oppression," exults Cooper, "begins now to totter; its day is far spent; the extension of knowledge has undermined its foundations, and I hope the day is not far distant when in Europe at least, one stone of the fabric will not be left upon another."<sup>7</sup>

All this, of course, was only theoretical revolutionism. In slowly-awakening Manchester, young Cooper assumed an enthusiastic but only partially successful role as leader in three relatively mild and orderly reform crusades: the first, for the abolition of the slave trade; the second, for the removal of some of the disabilities of religious dissenters; and the third, for temperate parliamentary reform through the Manchester Constitutional Society. Yet by these entirely peaceable and legitimate political activities, Cooper attracted enough unfavorable attention to insure his rejection by the Royal Society when nominated by Dr. Priestley, who generously stated that Cooper's knowledge of chemistry and philosophy "far exceeded his own," and who resigned his own membership when Cooper was rejected for a second time. The opposition was both political and theological, since Cooper had already argued for a necessarily benevolent Deity, and had denied the existence of an immaterial soul on the basis of a crudely-stated materialism, later to be significantly refined.

Then suddenly, across the narrow waters of the English Channel, revolution became something more than an affair of academic pamphlets and petitions. Cooper's prophetic wish reached electrifying fulfillment with respect to the stones of the Bastille,

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<sup>7</sup> *Memoirs, op. cit.*, Vol. III, 509.

very few of which *were* "left one upon another." To English radicals like Cooper, the outbreak of the French Revolution came as the dawn of a new and glorious day for all mankind. The so-called "Jacobin poets," Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, burst into song; and those of us today who were alive when word came of the downfall of Czarism in Russia in 1917 can understand the high hopes (*and* the subsequent keen disillusionments) of Cooper and his associates in 1789.

But to the English conservatives, soon to be aroused by the tongue and pen of Edmund Burke, the French upheaval was only an outburst of "wild theories and seditious doctrines respecting the so-called 'rights of man'"; and it called for stern repressive measures against all reformers, even the most law-abiding. In Birmingham an angry mob of rioters burned Dr. Priestley's Unitarian chapel, and sacked his house at Fairhill, destroying his furniture, his library, and the fruits of many years of labor for the good of mankind. When the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society refused to adopt a resolution of sympathy and respect for Priestley, Cooper and four others promptly resigned.<sup>8</sup>

When the opportunity presented itself for Cooper, as a "relaxation from great and long attention to business" to go to France with his friend James Watt, Jr., son of the famous inventor, in the spring of 1792, he jumped at the chance and soon found himself in the midst of most exciting events. Years later, in South Carolina, he remarked that "Those four months that I spent in Paris were the most happy and pleasant of my life. I laughed more than I ever did before or have since. I lived four years."<sup>9</sup>

Although Watt and Cooper had not been sent to France as

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<sup>8</sup> *Memoirs, op. cit.*, 3rd series, Vol. IX, 173.

<sup>9</sup> E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck, *op. cit.*, 332.



official emissaries of English sympathizers with the Revolution, they arranged to present an address from the Manchester Constitutional Society, written by Cooper and translated by Watt, congratulating the Jacobins as "the most determined enemies of arbitrary power," and pledging English co-operation in "propagating those important principles of liberty, which alone can fix on a firm and immovable basis, the empire of peace and the happiness of mankind."<sup>10</sup>

Cooper maintained in later years that he had quarreled openly with Robespierre when the latter refused to read the address to the Jacobin Club as he had promised to do. After calling him a "miserable scoundrel" to his face, Cooper claimed to have mounted the tribune and read the address himself, "which was well received, and with considerable noise." In any event, Watt and Cooper associated thereafter only with the moderate faction, the Gironde around Brissot. "Spies," he says, "were set upon us. . . . We invited them regularly to dinner, and, the poor devils not being used to drinking wine, we always got them drunk after dinner." Shortly afterwards, Cooper and Watt were denounced by Robespierre, were in danger of arrest and worse, so that they found it prudent to leave the country. Twenty years later Cooper was to write: "I went over to France in 1792 an enthusiast. I left in disgust."<sup>11</sup>

Returning to England after these first adventures with actual revolution, Cooper found a warm reception (in one sense at least) awaiting him in the form of a blistering personal attack delivered on the floor of the House of Commons by no less an orator than Edmund Burke. Burke claimed the existence of a faction of "enemies of the Constitution" who wanted to "force

<sup>10</sup> Dumas Malone, *The Public Life of Thomas Cooper*, 36-37.

<sup>11</sup> E. A. and G. L. Duyckinck, *op. cit.*, 334.

England into an alliance with France for the purpose . . . of carrying on a crusade for 'French liberty' everywhere." Challenged to name names, he cited Thomas Cooper and James Watt, Jr., as dangerous agents of the movement, depicting them as "locked in fraternizing embrace" with "that infamous band of regicides" and kissing "the bloody cheek of Marat."

Ever convinced that the best defense is a good offense, Cooper promptly published a pamphlet of eighty-three pages entitled *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective against Mr. Cooper and Mr. Watt*, in which he hurled back invective for invective, with some interest added. Burke had described them as "some of the worst men in the kingdom." Cooper came back with: "The description is a palpable untruth; Burke was mistaken in supposing *us* the worst men in the kingdom, while *he* is alive to make the assertion!" Yet the *Reply to Burke* remains, as Dumas Malone says, not only "a monument to Cooper's own power of invective, but also to his early passion for democracy."<sup>12</sup> As Cooper himself said, wryly, almost half a century later, "A young man must lay in a large stock of democracy, if he expects it to hold out to my age."

It must be granted that Cooper's vanity was considerable, and perhaps that he had a good deal to be vain about. Burke wounded that vanity sorely by not deigning to reply to Cooper's bitter rejoinder. Royal proclamations against seditious utterances were issued, and prosecutions of Cooper's friends were commenced. It seemed to be only a matter of time before his own bold words would bring him into court at the hands of the much-too-frightened Tories. There were anti-Jacobin riots in Manchester, with a mob shouting "Church and King—Damn Tom Paine!"

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<sup>12</sup> Dumas Malone, *op. cit.*, 50.



and Cooper probably escaped personal molestation only because his house at Bolton was ten miles from the center of the city.

When the Reign of Terror began in France, Cooper ceased to sympathize with the revolutionists of whom he had entertained such exalted hopes. He could not condone "the ferocious injustice of many of their practices." In the words of Malone, at this stage of his existence, "He had not found among his own countrymen or among the seemingly more congenial spirits across the channel that concern or reverence which he himself so strongly felt for eternal truth. Free inquiry was discouraged, his own convictions were misinterpreted, reform was blocked by what he regarded as stupid conservatism or perverted to intolerable anarchy and tyranny, human interest was flagrantly belittled or disregarded. So this knight-errant of freedom and humanity turned toward a new land, where, as fate would have it, he was to continue the struggle against one tyranny or another, for almost half a century."<sup>13</sup>

Why did Thomas Cooper come to America? He tells us, very sensibly, that the American government "certainly does appear to me preferable to the present British government; and being convinced (as I am) that the majority of the people of England are of the opposite opinion, and *not* being an advocate for propagating liberty by the bayonet, or terrifying a nation into freedom by the guillotine, I chuse for this also, among other reasons, to quit a country whose politics I cannot approve."<sup>14</sup> He supplied Abraham Lincoln, threescore and seven years later, with two-thirds of an immortal sentence by writing simply: "The Ameri-

<sup>13</sup> Dumas Malone, *op. cit.*, 72.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 2nd ed., iv.

can government is *of* the people and *by* the people." The American republicans, he went on, "have taught us that nations may flourish and be happy who have no bishops, no nobles, and no kings." To his liberty-loving but somewhat disillusioned soul, America was the one remaining promised land.

Thus Thomas Cooper was not "driven out" of his native England, but came to this country first in the character of a hopeful prospector or promoter contemplating a communal settlement for likeminded (that is, republican) Englishmen in some promising corner of the New World. With two of the sons of Dr. Priestley, and a part of his own family, he embarked in August, 1793, at the age of thirty-three. He spent most of that fall and winter on horseback exploring New York and Pennsylvania, and, on returning to England in February, he published *Some Information Respecting America* containing "nothing but what I should have been glad to have known when I went out." He was greatly impressed by the advantages of Pennsylvania. "I know," he wrote, "of very few objections which can be made to the state of Pennsylvania" (which) may "fairly be regarded as the most flourishing state of the Union." But he cast some doubts upon Harrisburg, which is "a pretty large American town beautifully, but unhealthily situated on the banks of the Susquehanna."<sup>15</sup>

One great attraction of America for Thomas Cooper was the economic relief it promised to the hard-pressed father of a large family. He had come to this country believing himself the proprietor of a "small fortune"; but 1793 was a bad year for calico-printers, and his firm in Manchester was dissolved by action of its creditors, leaving him with just about enough money to establish his family in Northumberland, Pennsylvania. Being no longer financially independent, Cooper was now obliged to

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 16, 136.



support himself by the practice of law and journalism. On the death of Priestley's wife in 1796, the Coopers went to live in the ample Priestley residence at Northumberland, which contained what was then probably the best combined scientific laboratory and library in America.

The other magnet which drew Cooper to America was its promise of relief from persecution on account of his unorthodox religious and political opinions. He did not go as far as another English observer of the same period, who stated that "If you wish to find out a country where you can write or speak whatever you please . . . you must come to America."<sup>16</sup> But Cooper did claim that America "has no animosities about religion; it is a subject about which no questions are asked." Coming from a country where "your religious opinions are the subject of popular obloquy, you would seek in America . . . an asylum from civil persecution and religious intolerance—some spot where you would suffer no defalcation in political rights on account of theological opinions; where you might be permitted to enjoy a perfect freedom of speech as well as of sentiment, on the two most important subjects of human enquiry."<sup>17</sup>

But, unfortunately for the sanguine expectations of Cooper, who seems to have convinced himself that American politicians were much less violent than those of the Old World, he arrived in America just as the Federalists, who had ruled the new nation from the beginning, were embarking upon an acrimonious campaign designed to smash their opponents, the anti-Federalists, under the patriotic guise of "saving the country" in an undeclared cold war with the French Directory. To accomplish their purpose, the vaunted "aristocracy of virtue" did not hesitate to whip up

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<sup>16</sup> *Emigration to America Candidly Considered*, (1798), 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Some Information Respecting America*, 3, 52.

and spread panic and hysteria from the top downwards against the supposedly disloyal "Gallic faction" of such "Jacobin monsters" as Jefferson and Madison. The Federalists, they averred, were the only truly American party; opposition to their policies was "enmity to the Constitution," and all who differed were no better than un-American traitors, "Frenchmen in all their feelings and wishes." Worst of all, said Federalist Congressman Robert G. Harper, were the philosophers, "the pioneers of revolution. They advance always in front, and prepare the way, by preaching infidelity, and weakening the respect of the people for ancient institutions. . . . They talk of the perfectibility of man, of the dignity of his nature; and entirely forgetting what he is, declaim perpetually about what he should be."<sup>18</sup>

It was only a short step from such premises as these to an attempted quarantine of subversive ideas in the form of the notorious Alien and Sedition Acts, administered by the humorless Timothy Pickering, Secretary of State, who liked to be called "The Scourge of Jacobinism. The whole disgraceful story of Pickering's zealous crusade against democracy has recently been told by Professor John C. Miller of Stanford University in his excellent study entitled *Crisis in Freedom*. As he points out, the excited Federalists soon became incapable of distinguishing between "a genuine, freedom-loving American democrat and a French Jacobin bent upon overturning religion, morality, and the state. . . . Conformity was the cardinal virtue, and so many ideas were labelled subversive that it began to seem that there would be no ideas left." "Thinking," as one journalist put it, "has become sedition."<sup>19</sup>

Knowing Thomas Cooper as we do, it is apparent that he was

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<sup>18</sup> *Annals of Congress*, Vol. VIII, March 29, 1798.

<sup>19</sup> John C. Miller, *Crisis in Freedom*, 90, 161.



a predestined victim of the Alien and Sedition Acts. Although he had made haste to become naturalized in 1795, he had come from abroad, an alien, he was a philosopher of note, an anti-clerical who had associated with the hated Jacobins in Paris, and an intimate friend of the Unitarian Dr. Priestley, who was supposed by some to be bent upon "decomposing both church and state" with his mysterious chemical formulas. For a time, both Priestley and Cooper refrained from any kind of controversy in America; but it was not long before they were goaded into action by the Federalist press, which took up the scurrilous attacks upon them launched by William Cobbett in England.

Moderate Federalists, such as Alexander Hamilton in a note to Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott on June 29, 1798, had warned their party: "Let us not establish a tyranny." To ardent democrats like Jefferson and Cooper, the Alien and Sedition Acts were truly "the entering wedge of a complete system of tyranny," with President John Adams cast in the role of a tyrant reaching out for unlimited authority. In France, it had been Robespierre; in England, Burke; and now, in America, it was John Adams. Having "taken on" the first two, Cooper, now the editor of the Northumberland *Gazette*, saw no reason to quail before his third tyrant, especially in what he supposed to be "a free country." So, in June, 1799, Cooper depicted Adams as a power-mad despot bent upon destroying popular sovereignty, and followed his editorial with a handbill containing even more forceful denunciations of the President's policies. The Federalists lost little time in bringing him to trial under the Sedition Act before Justice Samuel Chase of the United States Supreme Court, already notorious as "the American Jeffreys," a "hanging judge" in sedition cases.

Cooper conducted his own defense, and although blocked at

every possible point by the judge's adverse rulings, managed to ask some very pertinent questions: "Is it a crime to doubt the capacity of the President? Have we advanced so far on the road to despotism in this republican country, that we dare not say our President may be mistaken?" He had very little use for doctrines of infallibility, Presidential or otherwise.<sup>20</sup> Justice Chase gave a charge to the jury which sounded to the friends of Cooper more like a summation of a prosecutor delivered with "all the bitterness of a vindictive personal enemy." The jury, "having been well selected for the purpose, were taken up to Dunwoody's tavern to consider their verdict, which did not take longer than was necessary to prepare and drink their punch."<sup>21</sup> In that interval, twenty minutes, Cooper was found guilty, and, being convinced of his innocence, and hence quite unrepentant, he was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine of four hundred dollars, with additional bonds of two thousand dollars to be furnished for his future good behavior.

What is notable on Cooper's side of this deplorable persecution is the broadly philosophical tone (rare among his party, except for Jefferson himself) of his approach to the main issue, freedom of inquiry, not only in Pennsylvania, but everywhere. The more we understand of the science of government," he wrote, "the less necessity we find for governmental secrets. State-craft and priest-craft are fond of hidden mysteries . . . but hidden motives are always suspicious in a republican government. In such a government . . . secrecy is the child of misconduct and the parent of mischief." On the other hand, "it is the general diffusion of knowledge, it is free discussion, that eradicates the prejudices of the people . . . people will be governed by their passions, if they

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-207.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.



are not governed by their reason. If the complaints of the multitude, be they well- or ill-founded, are forcibly suppressed, there is danger; for people *will think*, though they may be prohibited from speaking; and sometimes they will act; but in nine cases out of ten, let the ebullitions of political opinion evaporate as they arise, and they will not acquire force enough to justify apprehension."<sup>22</sup> (*Italics his.*)

"In such expressions as these," writes Dumas Malone, "Cooper appears at his best, and Jeffersonian campaign literature contains no finer statement of democratic idealism or of the desirability of freedom of discussion."<sup>23</sup> In spite of some lapses which are traceable to the generally low tone of the political manners of the period, Cooper reached the pinnacle of his career as foe of tyranny and friend of freedom just before and during the rough-and-tumble campaign year of 1800.

But his courageous stand for high principle as a member of what he called "the great party of mankind" did not prevent his spending six months of what he termed "tedious imprisonment" in a Philadelphia jail, during which time his wife died, just before his release. His fine was paid, and when the Acts were repealed, a bill was repeatedly introduced in Congress to repay him the four hundred dollars with interest. But such were the delays in that body that the money did not reach his heirs until ten years after Cooper's decease.

Such were the fortunes of politics, moreover, that Cooper's trial and "martyrdom," by helping to bring about the victory of the anti-Federalists, hastened his own partial alienation from the party of democracy. The next twenty years of his life, four of which were spent at Dickinson, were destined to be "the most con-

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Cooper, *Political Essays*, 2nd ed., 78-79, 84-85.

<sup>23</sup> Dumas Malone, *op. cit.*, 98.

servative of his career," and in many respects the most fruitful. The anti-Federalists now found themselves, as office-holders, on the receiving end of the sort of harsh criticism that they had been leveling against the previous administration, and the change was, as always, a sobering experience. Cooper now had a chance to prove his constructive as well as his destructive abilities. As Commissioner of the Luzerne land-claims in the Wyoming Valley, which were in dispute between settlers from Connecticut and the Susquehanna Land Company, he acted with remarkable fairness, patience, and attention to minute detail, only to wind up in a violent controversy over an injudicious letter which he wrote to the secretary of the land office. His services were selfless and magnificent, but once more he marred a fine public record by a single hot-headed indiscretion.

In 1804, he was appointed presiding judge of the third district of Pennsylvania, which then included the counties of Berks, Northampton, Luzerne, and Northumberland, at a salary of \$1,600 a year. Although placed upon the bench by the triumphant anti-Federalists as a reward for his sacrifices, Cooper soon found himself less and less in sympathy with their extreme attacks upon the state judiciary, of which he was now a member. They reminded him, he said, of the French revolutionists. By now, Cooper was definitely a gradualist in his reform activities, with the result that his valiant attempts to uphold the dignity of the state courts against the assaults of the ignorant members of his own party brought him copious abuse as a turncoat. As one anti-Federalist writer expressed it: "Alas! poor Cooper; how art thou fallen; in science, sun of the morning, but in firmness and stability, weak as the weakest of the people."<sup>24</sup> The philosophical revolutionist had become a tired radical, politically, hardly more

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<sup>24</sup> *Aurora*, July 6, 1805.



than a mildly progressive conservative, convinced that for the present, it would be safest to "err on the side of control."

It was during his term as judge, in the spring of 1809, that, "having a month to spare," Cooper decided to "take a ride to the falls of Niagara" starting from Williamsport. On his first scouting trip in 1796, he had penetrated as far as the falls of the Genesee when that part of the country was "almost a wilderness," and he wanted to see how rapidly it had become settled. His account of the trip reveals his vast alertness and curiosity, especially concerning all sorts of useful scientific matters, and his eagerness to make his own information available to others. After covering the first fourteen miles from Williamsport, he remarks, "Here the tolerable road ends." For the rest of Pennsylvania, "a very bad road through a very improvable country." At the New York state line, however, "the road, from being execrable, becomes suddenly pleasant and good"—temporarily. He passes through Penn Yan, Geneva, and Canadaigua (which boasts no less than eight lawyers), and marvels that "he is seldom out of sight of a house." He notes with approval that "they make good beer at Batavia, at five dollars the thirty-three gallons, chiefly from wheat." At Dickson's Mills he collects specimens of gypsum from a well, and samples of sulphur water, which soon lose their potency. The worst road of all ran from Batavia to Buffalo, "three-fourths consists of swamps and bogholes, to say nothing of stumps innumerable."

Arrived in the vicinity of the falls, Cooper got no help whatever in regard to directions for sightseeing from landlord Stevens, who told him, with a truly awe-inspiring economy of language: "They are by the roadside, you cannot miss them." Cooper, unlike his later countryman Herbert Spencer, waxed eloquent in his description of the cataract: "Altogether a scene of grandeur and

beauty unrivalled. I felt content that I had taken the journey. It was worth the trouble."<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile Cooper had become "a man without a party," and the state was in the hands of the political faction which he had most offended. As he said himself: "I have long found it impossible for me to go to all lengths with the party to which I belonged, and of course I have shared the common fate of all moderate men. I have influence with no party, and have willingly and deliberately incurred the decided hatred of the most violent and thoroughgoing of my own."<sup>26</sup>

Having endured the slings and arrows of the outrageous Federalists, he was now to receive similar treatment from the offended anti-Federalists. Petitions poured into the legislature complaining of his conduct upon the bench, many of the fifty-three charges finally enumerated being trivial complaints regarding his too-British standards of legal decorum (he had fined four or five men a dollar apiece for disturbing his court, and a Quaker for not removing his hat). As he said in a letter to Judge James Hamilton of Carlisle on March 12, 1811, "Before a *legal* tribunal I should be safe, but men who are not lawyers are not strongly impressed with the nature of evidence." The Sovereign People (as he called them) in legislature assembled, sustained only eight of the fifty-three charges against him, but voted by about three to one to recommend his removal to Governor Snyder, although Cooper seems to have been on sound ground in maintaining—to very deaf ears—that, if the charges were serious enough to warrant his removal, he ought to have been tried by impeachment.

Plainly Thomas Cooper was not suited, either temperamen-

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<sup>25</sup> *A Ride to Niagara in 1809*, 8, 9, 12, 16, 21, 26.

<sup>26</sup> *Narrative of the Proceedings against Thomas Cooper, Esq., etc.*, 6.



tally or by his past training in the rigid formalities of British justice, to the office of judge in a frontier community. But, in his eyes, his precious principles were being threatened once again, this time by the "despotic and vindictive spirit" of the dregs of a political party (his own) reserving "their most bitter execrations for the aristocracy of talents" to which he knew very well that he himself belonged. They were not Pennsylvania Robespierres, perhaps, but they were budding tyrants just the same; and Thomas Cooper was not one to be duped by party labels or democratic disguises. By this time, he was sure that he knew tyranny when he saw it.

These two major set-backs, imprisonment and removal from office, at the hands of each of the two principal American political parties, seem only to have enhanced the esteem in which Cooper was held by his many eminent friends, among whom were several of the Trustees of Dickinson College. It may well be true that two of them, David Watts and Thomas Duncan, well-known lawyers of Carlisle, who had assisted him in his defense before the legislature, had irregularly promised him "a relation to the college" previous to his removal as judge, in April, 1811. On June 27th of that year, at any rate, Cooper was elected Professor of Chemistry and Natural Philosophy at a salary of \$800 a year, succeeding Dr. Aigster, whose services had "terminated in a somewhat spectacular fashion" amid talk of outright "derangement."

In 1809 the college was without a principal (or president) and at a very low ebb, with only forty-two students enrolled, when upon the recommendation of President Timothy Dwight of Yale (known as the "Pope" of New England Congregationalism and also as "a Scourge of Jacobins"), another staunch New Englander, President Jeremiah Atwater of Middlebury College

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

in Vermont was induced to become principal of Dickinson with (as he said) "almost everything to be begun anew." He was a deeply religious man, and "aimed to have a college in which religion was respected and honored," an uphill undertaking, in his eyes, in the Carlisle of that period. In his own words, "I came here and found no discipline, the young men their own masters, doing what was right in their own eyes, spending their time at taverns and in the streets, lying in bed always till breakfast, caring nothing for any power which the faculty ever exercised." A former colleague of his at Middlebury who visited him in 1812 remarked: "The students are lawless as the whirlwind. The inhabitants of the country, it is said, are of the stubborn race of the Scotch-Irish . . ." <sup>27</sup>

It is painfully apparent that the New England Calvinism of Atwater and the "medical materialism" of Cooper were about as explosive a combination as the chemical mixture of bismuth and nitric acid which, it is said, once blinded Cooper temporarily when he suddenly uncorked the bottle. Atwater had unsuccessfully opposed Cooper's coming, and wrote to Dr. Rush, who favored it to the point of insistence, that "the whole affair seems like a sort of infatuation" which he seems to have thought would pass away. A warning from some absent Trustees that Cooper's religious heterodoxy would injure the college, then under Presbyterian patronage, in the eyes of the public was ignored.

Cooper seems to have made heroic efforts to avoid giving offense in matters of outward conformity, at any rate. He began his new career as professor with an *Introductory Lecture* (100 pages long, when published, with 136 pages of Notes) that was virtually a course in the history of chemistry, one of the first, if not the first of its kind in America, and written without the aid

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<sup>27</sup> James Henry Morgan, *op. cit.*, 184-185.



of his and Priestley's library, which was still at Northumberland.

The sudden transition from judge to science teacher involved no break in Cooper's enthusiasm for the central gospel of the Enlightenment, the liberating effect of useful knowledge. "It is knowledge," he told his students, "that must render us respectable and respected; for only those who possess it are so, whether as nations or individuals." But he could not refrain, in some of the Notes, from expressing his strong distaste for the prevailing Scottish metaphysics. He anticipated the modern logical positivists in asserting that "In fact, all metaphysics not built upon psychology, is little better than unmeaning jargon"; and "If a man would understand anything on the subject of metaphysics, let him first if he can attend a course of anatomy."<sup>28</sup>

The visiting former colleague of Atwater's at Middlebury also noted that, in 1812, "The officers of the College are at sword's points with each other." As usual, in the nineteenth century, the issue was disciplinary—"drunkenness, swearing, lewdness, and duelling." President Atwater complained especially of Cooper's attitude toward "a most unfortunate duel between two students" that "he took the side of the students too much and has been applauded by them. There was something intemperate in his manner and disrespectful to the faculty."<sup>29</sup> In a letter to a friend in New Haven in May, 1814, Atwater went much further: "Thomas Cooper has shown himself out to be what *we* always tho't him to be, and he ought long since to have been removed from the situation which he disgraces. Poor man, what a dreadful account will he have to give shortly for his impious conduct in this world."<sup>30</sup> (*Italics his.*)

<sup>28</sup> *Introductory Lecture of Thomas Cooper, Esq., etc.*, 99-100, 236.

<sup>29</sup> James Henry Morgan, *op. cit.*, 183, 189.

<sup>30</sup> Jeremiah Atwater to Samuel B. How, May 13, 1814, letter in the Dickinsoniana Collection, courtesy of its curator, Professor Charles Coleman Sellers.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

For his part, Cooper excoriated Atwater as totally incapable of maintaining discipline, both because of his "gross and manifest deficiencies as a man of learning, and the notorious meanness of his private character." Although the President "has for a long time pretended to teach geography . . . (yet) his students *finishing their education* knew not the import of Latitude and Longitude," and their examinations were "so trifling" as to make Cooper "blush from beginning to end" when he attended them. He makes the further astonishing suggestion that "although there is no moral turpitude in dealing in horse-flesh for the purpose of hiring out these horses to the students—in speculating in oats, or hay, or flour, or fish, to gain money by retailing them—yet this mode of accumulating property is plainly inconsistent with the character of a man presumed to be devoted to literary pursuits and public instruction." In sum, in Cooper's estimation, Atwater was indeed "a perfect millstone around the neck of this institution . . . obtaining his money under false pretenses."<sup>31</sup> (*Italics his.*)

All this torrent of exasperation, and much more, poured forth in what amounted to Cooper's letter of resignation in June, 1815. It might be entertaining to try to determine which of these educators held the lower opinion of the other, but it would probably be unprofitable. For they, and virtually the entire faculty of seven, left Dickinson simultaneously in September of that year. The student body, which had risen to 125 at the peak of the Atwater administration, had been reduced by internal strife and war jitters to the same number, forty-two, as in 1809. "A brave try," in Dr. Morgan's words, had failed, and there can be no doubt that the irreconcilable differences between Atwater and Cooper,

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Cooper to David Watt, Esq., June 15, 1815. Hamilton Library, Carlisle, published in *Dickinson Alumnus*, XVI, No. 1 (Sept. 1938).



reflecting a deep division in the Board of Trustees, were largely to blame.

The anti-Federalists among the student body were embarrassingly vocal in their praise of Professor Cooper. A Fourth of July banquet toast hailed him as "The Profound Philosopher, the Genuine Patriot, and the Endearred Friend." The group of Trustees who had brought him to Dickinson seemed quite unrepentant about the matter at his departure, although Atwater had been sure that Cooper would "before long run himself out" of the esteem of his friends. After Cooper's resignation, there appeared in the magazine *Port Folio* what Dr. Morgan describes as a "peculiar" letter signed by eleven of the Board, expressing "extreme regret" at not being able to induce Cooper to remain, praising his "very able and faithful discharge" of his duties as professor, resulting in "great and important benefits" to the college, and declaring flatly that all his conduct, "either as a professor or as a gentleman, has been such as, in every respect, to meet our warmest approbation." They, at least, and including one clergyman, were still "infatuated."<sup>32</sup>

Thomas Cooper did indeed perform some "great and important" incidental services for the college which he all but closed, such as the acquisition and use by his students and himself of the priceless Priestley apparatus (Cooper was the first American to produce the newly discovered metal potassium by the "fire method"). His presence on the Dickinson campus as the top-ranking chemist in the country gave it the luster of leadership in chemistry and chemical engineering which attracted members of the Dupont family as students, and inspired local interest in dozens of pursuits as widely separated as collecting specimens in mineralogy and translating the *Institutes* of Justinian. Few

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<sup>32</sup> *The Port Folio*, 3rd series, Vol. VI, 512-514.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

colleges in America could claim a professor with anything like the combined erudition and practical know-how of Thomas Cooper. As Jefferson said of his hopes of inducing Cooper to come to the new University of Virginia: "It will give our young men some idea of what constitutes an educated man."

Carlisle, for its part, provided Cooper with some excellent table-companions at its various hotels, and at open-air "beefsteak parties" at Meeting House Springs. In the kitchen, it was said that he was "a chemist of no ordinary calibre, admirable in compounding sauces and gravies, which he enjoyed very much." The city also furnished his second wife, Miss Elizabeth Hemming, described as "a lady of English birth," by whom he had three more children.<sup>33</sup>

Thomas Cooper lived for a quarter of a century after his departure from Dickinson, but it will be impossible to do more than sketch that somewhat anti-climactic phase of his ever-turbulent career. He continued to teach, first at the University of Pennsylvania, after Jefferson's strong desire to make him "the corner stone" of the new edifice of the University of Virginia as professor of chemistry, mineralogy, natural philosophy, and law, was frustrated by "the denunciations of the satellites of religious inquisition," the clergy; and then at South Carolina College, later the University of South Carolina, of which Cooper became the second president in 1820, succeeding Jonathan Maxcy, who had previously been the third president of Union College.

In that day, before intercollegiate athletics provided a safety-valve for youthful energies, South Carolina had even more violent disciplinary troubles than Dickinson: rioting, duelling, fisticuffs, and the discharging of firearms, especially in the "bad-weather months" of January and February. As Cooper remarked

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<sup>33</sup> Charles F. Himes, *Life and Times of Judge Thomas Cooper*, 35, 66.



of some of their milder antics: "The students make noises, and blow horns on a moonlight night. They sometimes burn the benches belonging to the college. They refrain from attending lectures on pretense of rain, by a general cry of 'Hold back!' They are seen (it is said) lounging in taverns."<sup>34</sup> Yet the students sensed a friend in their learned president, who advocated then what is now known as "student government." They called him "Old Coot," a name which "suited him exactly," for he was less than five feet tall, with a large and almost cubical bald head, so that he looked "like a wedge with a head on it."<sup>35</sup>

At South Carolina, Cooper continued to promote the interests of science, with great services to the study of medicine, and the treatment of insanity also, in addition to lecturing on metaphysics, rhetoric and *belles lettres*. But in 1823 he asked permission to offer a course in political economy, which he was able to do two years later. His advocacy of *laissez faire* found eager disciples, and he became "the schoolmaster of states' rights" credited with a major share in "forming South Carolina opinion on nullification and free trade." It was Cooper who, in 1827, bade his fellow South Carolinians "calculate the value of the Union," a fateful phrase which is credited by many with fathering, ultimately, nullification and secession and the war between North and South.

This pioneering advocacy of extreme states' rights placed Cooper, eventually, in an unusual position for him, since he was at last on the side of the majority, politically, in South Carolina. But it was a strange sight to behold the former advocate of the abolition of the slave trade now defending slavery as advantageous to the slaves themselves, and the consistent champion of

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<sup>34</sup> Dumas Malone, *op. cit.*, 362.

<sup>35</sup> Charles F. Himes, *op. cit.*, 67.

free discussion proposing to limit the circulation of abolitionist literature in the Southern states. Cooper had become too good a Southron: "he loved the Union too little because he loved liberty too well"—say some. But there is no possible way of excusing his fundamental inconsistency in these matters during his declining years, except to say that it was probably concealed from him by his too-great ability to rationalize. He was blinded, that is, by his zeal for combatting every external infringement of the rights of white South Carolinians, and by his obsession with the threats to those liberties involved in the "consolidation" of a strong Federal Union. Against this next-to-last imagined "tyranny" of his life, he fought with only too deadly effectiveness, and in behalf of what was now a sadly truncated conception of human freedom.

On the other front, that of religious controversy, Cooper became much more aggressive and even hysterical, "terrified by his own fancies," until, as one lay critic put it, "in the warmth of his imagination, the very posts and old trees were converted into Clergymen."<sup>36</sup> One can understand how he might easily have come to believe that the clergy had subjected him to systematic harassment throughout the years. But his reckless tirades against them merely provoked stronger counter-measures. Charges were brought that President Cooper was injuring the college by "wilfully and unnecessarily" promulgating offensive opinions; and after public hearings, at which the students sided with Cooper almost to a man, he was acquitted with only three or four Trustees voting against him. He had abjured none of his opinions; his enemies said that he had "confessed the charge and triumphed in his guilt." In his own defense he had said: "It is a serious misfortune to run half-a-century ahead of the knowledge

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<sup>36</sup> Dumas Malone, *op. cit.*, 339.



of the day; and if a man is bent on doing this, he should make up his mind to meet the consequences and count the cost."<sup>37</sup>

But though the "old heretic" surprisingly won his last battle with the clergy, probably because of strong support on political grounds, the enrollment of the college had declined about twenty-five per cent (from 115 students to eighty-six), and Cooper weary at seventy-four of the incessant warfare, resigned the presidency in 1833, to continue as professor of chemistry.

During the last war, a former student of mine who is now on the faculty of Syracuse University was stationed at Fort Jackson near Columbia, South Carolina. I suggested that he hunt up the burial-place of Thomas Cooper and see what was on his tombstone. He had some difficulty in locating it, but finally found it in the churchyard of Trinity Episcopal Church. The inscription shows that, even in death, Cooper continued to divide his fellow Americans, for it reads: "Erected, by a portion of his fellow-citizens, to the memory of Thomas Cooper, M.D. & L.L.D., former President of the South Carolina College. . . ."

So lived and died an able advocate of universal liberty, whose grievous shortcomings should not be allowed to obscure the merits which outweigh them. We may think of Thomas Cooper as an Englishman who helped us to realize the full meaning of our own revolution by voluntarily attaching himself to our cause in the spirit of the Age of Reason. He was, in the best sense of the often maligned words, a "free thinker"; and he demonstrated, once and for all, that what were called "infidels" in his day were capable of high idealism, self-sacrifice, and costly devotion to principle. I think Professor Schneider is mistaken in character-

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 358, 361.

izing Cooper as the "least scientific" of the American scientific philosophers of his period. For Cooper was a true experimentalist, learning almost too much from his repeated failures to enlighten and reform mankind, because he so often attempted too much. He anticipated modern pragmatists in groping his way toward an empirical science of politics, maintaining that "government is as much a science of experiment as chemistry," although he conceded that men had, in his day and solely in America, gained "only a glimpse of the true path" to its attainment.<sup>38</sup>

His fame has suffered by being overshadowed in science by Priestley and in almost all respects by his good friend Jefferson, both men being temperamentally better balanced than himself. Given Cooper's native combativeness, his father's choice of law as his vocation made him a life-long litigant, forever approaching issues as an impassioned pleader for a cause. He was at his worst in controversy; and his life was a series of controversies. As Malone has suggested, his career summarizes the course of liberal Western thought from the doctrinaire optimism of the Age of Reason to the more realistic empiricism and naturalism of the twentieth century, with occasional lapses into pessimism and doubt. Cooper banked everything on the triumph of scientific knowledge and its extension to ethics and politics. He proclaimed himself a materialist, in the sense that he was convinced of the dependence of the psychical upon the physical, but the psychology which he borrowed from Hartley, Cabanis, and Broussais was too crude to make his philosophy convincing.

By and large I think one would have to grant that Cooper was justified in depicting himself as "running half a century ahead of the knowledge of his day." In many fields, his battles have since been won; but the one battle which was closest to

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<sup>38</sup> Dumas Malone, *op. cit.*, 189, 220.



his heart of hearts continues unabated, for it must be continually re-won. I refer to the cause of complete freedom of inquiry, the right to turn the light of the mind upon every department of life, to reject any principle which will not bear examination by the full-bodied reason of man, and to oppose any regime anywhere that denies the legitimacy of free discussion. That, to Cooper, was the most sacred of the rights of man, and it lies at the core of the never-ending struggle for academic freedom.

On this key issue of his time and of ours, we know where Thomas Cooper stood, and we may derive inspiration from his example. But one of the great temptations of our time and his is to "fight fire with fire"—to combat Communism, for example, by methods borrowed from the Communists. That was a temptation to which, alas, Thomas Cooper too often succumbed. The cure for irrationality is not more irrationality, but reason, the inquiring mind. He should have remembered that—that the first and last duty of an apostle of reason is to be reasonable.

SPENCER F. BAIRD—WORLD-FAMOUS  
NATURALIST\*



*Elmer Charles Herber*

PERMIT me to preface this talk with a few personal words in connection with my interest in the life of Spencer Fullerton Baird. Quite a few visitors and some students peering into different parts of the Baird Biological Laboratory would ask whether Baird collected the birds on exhibition there or whether he collected all the birds listed as coming from South America. A few of the more lucid would ask whether he was actually the founder of the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. A little preliminary investigation revealed that we had none of his bird specimens and very few of his published articles. (The query about the Woods Hole laboratory will be referred to later.) The Curator of Dickinsoniana soon secured some of the missing volumes which were published by Baird. Dr. Boyd Lee Spahr warmly encouraged me to do more extensive work on Baird, and has aided at every point. The late Dr. Edwin Grant Conklin was greatly interested, and the American Philosophical Society, of which he had been president, assisted me with a grant-in-aid. For this support I wish to express my sincere appreciation.

Part of my enthusiasm for this undertaking was kindled by the

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\* Dr. Herber is Chairman of the Department of Biology at Dickinson College. The lecture was delivered on April 22, 1955.



unsolicited remarks made by several of the present department heads of the National Museum, Washington, D.C., which Baird founded, about the enormous amount of collecting, organizing, writing and identification he must have done all by himself. Such remarks and those gleaned in these few years of intermittent research have made Baird appear to me like a giant, many-branched white oak tree among a few oaks perhaps taller but with fewer branches and near a forest of many not as desirable species of trees of varied colors, some grayish or even black.

Spencer F. Baird was born in Reading, Pa., February 13, 1823. His given name, Spencer, was a well-known family name on his mother's side. His ancestors were mostly of Scottish descent, some of whom originally lived in the New England states. His mother's sister, Valeria Biddle, married Charles Bingham Penrose, who practiced law first in Carlisle and later in Philadelphia, and finally entered political life as Solicitor of the United States Treasury. Sons of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Penrose were shooting companions of Baird when they lived in Carlisle.

Spencer's father died on July 27, 1833, at the age of forty-seven. He was a lawyer and appeared from the two letters he had written to his son, Spencer, a sincere patriotic citizen. He had been a member of the Academic Senate of Dickinson College where William, the eldest son, was a student. After the death of the father, the family moved to Carlisle. Spencer attended West Nottingham Academy for a little more than a year and for another year he attended the Grammar School of Dickinson College. At the age of thirteen he entered Dickinson College.

A few words about life in Carlisle and Dickinson while he was a student here. His initial interest in natural history was probably aroused by his father who had led him in the Reading countryside to look at nature. By the time he attended West Notting-

ham Academy he was known as one of the "Possum Hunters." During his first two years at Dickinson he often went along with his brother, William, in search of birds. Now in his junior year, at the age of fifteen, he began to demonstrate the orderly mind of the scientist—keeping an accurate account of all his activities and observations in the form of a diary. This he carried on for the rest of his life with a few exceptions during vacation travel. At this time we note that he began to observe very carefully and tried to confirm his observations in books; but much in natural history was sketchy and incomplete; it was waiting for someone to straighten it out. Baird had such an insatiable curiosity—a sort of divine thirst for knowledge—and such an infectious enthusiasm to tell it that he soon became recognized as a promising scientist. He read what books he was able to buy, often exchanged specimens for others or walked to Harrisburg to borrow books from the State Library. Inserted into the end of one of his diaries he records having read about eighty volumes including Shakespeare, Emerson, Coleridge, Dumas, Longfellow, Carlyle, Tennyson and others not in the scientific field. He records attending political rallies, parties and lectures, but his main entries were on the number of birds shot and stuffed on this or that trip. Several pages in his diary were devoted to dates when he wrote or received letters from scientists all over the world and part of the contents of these letters.

Carlisle was a small town in 1846 when Baird entered Dickinson. With the exception of the turnpike, the trains were the chief means of communication with the outside. In 1839, a school of Cavalry was established at the Carlisle Barracks which brought many officers and their families to the town. After completing their tour of duty some of these officers retired in the vicinity. The people were community conscious and took part in many politi-



cal meetings. There were also itinerant lecturers who delivered discourses on various subjects. But perhaps the strongest feature in influencing young Baird was the fertile Cumberland Valley with its well-known streams, the Conodoguinet and Yellow Breeches Creeks which attracted thousands of birds during the migratory season and many others during the rest of the year. As yet there were no restrictions for hunting and fishing. A day's take of forty-five specimens by Baird was nothing unusual then but now would be almost unbelievable. The limestone of the region had many uncollected and undescribed fossils at that time. Streams, ponds, rotting logs and hillsides had numerous frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles, snakes and other mammals. Here was a good opportunity for a budding naturalist—good heritage, good surroundings and he soon won the affection of the great minds in his field.

Dr. Durbin, one of the great presidents of Dickinson, was in office during Baird's years at this institution. As most college presidents have, he had his anxious moments as Baird records on June 24, 1839, "Misunderstanding between faculty and freshman class. The faculty dismissed eleven of them. Some members of the other classes were also dismissed." Baird attended church services in town especially when he liked the preacher. That he was no fanatic about regular church attendance can be inferred from his getting excused from morning chapels because of "palpitation of the heart." Actually he was of good physique and capable of walking with a pack on his back upwards of sixty miles in one day. But even remembering this subterfuge of his, we can find nothing in his life but an example of true Christian character; he was a kindly man with no known enemies, no angry moments, and was always willing to help budding scientists or any cause for the betterment of society.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

William H. Allen, Professor of Natural Science, was perhaps his favorite professor. On Nov. 8, 1839 he "mended a piece of broken electrical apparatus" for Allen. On Nov. 10, he was busy all day helping him make oxygen. On Jan. 7, 1840, he helped him analyze oxide of iron from Pine Grove. Later, Professor Allen wrote a letter of introduction to T. Hopkins, a cousin, "I take great pleasure in introducing to you my worthy and esteemed friend, Professor Baird, of Dickinson College. He has acquired a high reputation as a naturalist, particularly in the department of Ornithology to which he has devoted many years of active labor. Any attentions which your professional engagements will permit you to extend to him will be appreciated by him and cordially reciprocated by myself whenever an opportunity may occur. Especially will you do me a kindness if you can present him to any bird watchers, or beast hunters, or shell gatherers, or bug finders, or plant analyzers or other persons of the same genus within the range of your acquaintance."<sup>1</sup>

In college he was a member, and for some time secretary, of the Union Philosophical Society which included at that time both students and professors. Some time later he got the Society to bestow an honorary membership on Professor Strickland, Oxford University, England. The inevitable examinations for the A.B. degree came a little more than a month before his graduation. He records their sequence:

June 1, 1840. Examinations in Butler's Analogy, Wayland's Philosophy, Paley's Evidences of Christianity.

June 2. Smillec's Philosophy, Natural History and Uplands Mental Philosophy.

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<sup>1</sup> Archives of the Smithsonian Institution. These papers form the major source on Baird's life. Others are in the Library of Dickinson College. See also Dahl, W. H., *Spencer Fullerton Baird*, Philadelphia, 1915.



June 3. Chemistry, Natural Philosophy, Optics and Astronomy.

June 4. Mathematics.

June 5. Languages.

On July 19, 1840, on his commencement day, the seventeen-year-old Baird proudly stated, "Our class consisted of nineteen. It entered college with forty-eight. As a class we have always been remarkably united, suffering no society feelings to divide us. The valedictory address by George R. Crooks of Adams County, Illinois, elicited much emotion from the class, there being scarcely a dry eye at its close. All went off admirably. I did not speak today because I was not well enough to write."

And now began five years of searching—a youth of seventeen trying to find his place in the world. He traveled around the countryside, especially up and down the Susquehanna Valley in search of natural history specimens, and he visited Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and other places seeking to talk with scientists, to study in libraries, and to examine specimens. At odd times at home he would study French, German, Italian, Spanish and Danish. In these years he did more work of graduate school caliber than many young graduate students do for a Ph.D. degree. Of course the Ph.D. wasn't offered.

About a year after he was graduated from college, he studied medicine in New York for a few months under a Dr. Goldsmith. While he was there he was introduced to Audubon with whom he had corresponded for about two years. This meeting between Audubon and Baird was the beginning of a friendship which lasted until the death of Audubon. Within a year after Baird's introduction to the great artist, Audubon gave him the major part of his bird collection which included many types of species. He was also to be one of Baird's greatest boosters for the position of Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. However,

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

Baird had come to New York to study medicine. But he did not like it, and after he once came home because of ill health he could not be persuaded to go back to the study of it. His brother, William, wrote to Spencer, "I received your letter and sorry to find that you had a distaste for medical life. As, however, you have it, it perhaps would be best not to pursue the study, for no one ever succeeds in a profession he is not fond of. As it is necessary for you to do something, you ought to make up your mind. No means of livelihood, however, is to be obtained in America from Ornithology."

To carry on his studies he had to depend on the kindness of his mother and grandmother. They were not very enthusiastic about using so much money for shot and guns so his brother, William, who was employed in Washington, helped him at times. His urge was great to go to new places in search of different species. Such feelings show up in a letter to brother William, who was about to go on a vacation to Cape May, New Jersey: "How I wish I were going along. Wouldn't we walk into the birds? Shooting and stuffing. I would think nothing of sitting up till twelve every night stuffing what we had been all day in shooting. If I had the money, I would start off tomorrow, to meet you at the Island. The expense would be about \$16 there, and back again, the remaining expense would be for board. However, what can't be, can't."

Many a youth would have quit this quest for exactness in natural history. Too much of the population was not in sympathy with basic research. On one trip when he was collecting fossils, he was suspected of being crazy by a farmer because he hammered at the stones in a field. On another occasion his whole group of collectors was suspected of having escaped from a lunatic asylum. On many such trips he would present the appear-



ance of a tramp because of his knapsack. Once he visited a small town to have a talk with the Governor of the State of Pennsylvania with whom he had an appointment. He went to the hotel clerk and asked for a room; the clerk concluded that this stranger with the odd baggage should have one of the rooms reserved for the humblest guests. After washing up he came downstairs where he met the Governor, receiving a hearty and friendly greeting. The clerk found an early excuse to explain that he had a better room now and suggested that he should move.

He also began courting Mary Churchill, the daughter of a Colonel, who had been stationed at the Carlisle Barracks. He repaired her fans; she labeled his specimens and became so proficient that he said she could do it better than anyone else. When he began to see her regularly he used to bring his books to her house in the evening, after one of those walks in the country, to read in her presence until he fell asleep, making it necessary for her to wake him when it was time to go home. He did not marry her until he was elected Professor of Natural History at Dickinson College.

Before he was elected to that position he had shown that he was a man of great physical and intellectual strength, and perhaps in truth, Huxley's picture of a liberally educated man: "That man, I think, has had a liberal education, who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all the work that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of nature and of the laws of her operations; one who, no

stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; who has learned to love all beauty, whether of nature or art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself."

In 1845 Baird was appointed Professor of Natural History and Curator of the Cabinet of Dickinson College without pay; the following year he was granted a salary of \$400; in 1847, \$650; in 1848, \$1000. He stayed one more year at the same salary. Usually fewer than 150 students were in attendance at one time, unless one counts the Grammar School which was semi-attached to the college. There were usually seven or eight professors on the faculty. The library of the college had about 5,100 volumes; Belles Lettres, 4,500; Union Philosophical, 4,100. There were prayers morning and evening excepting Saturdays and Sundays when the evening prayer was omitted. Candidates for admission to the freshman class had to be well acquainted with Arithmetic, Algebra, History, Latin, Greek, and the Historical Books of the New Testament and they had to have testimonials of good character. By 1849 it was mentioned in the catalogue that the Department of Natural History was well supplied with specimens and had efficient instruction.

During their college career, the students studied Latin, Religion, Greek and Mathematics every year; English two years; other subjects for varying terms and often at extra charge. Baird taught the juniors in Physics, the seniors in Geology, Chemistry, Astronomy, Botany and Zoology. Students were examined three times a year and seniors were examined about one month ahead of the other students.

A few interesting notes taken from letters sent by students and associates of Baird to him may give you a clearer picture of how stimulating his friendship was. George Bibb wrote after



Baird left for Washington, "The new professors are liked quite well but not as well as those who left us. If you should want anything caught you must be sure and let me know and if it is to be had I'll get it for you. I am always ready to do anything for you that I can. Nothing would delight me more than to get your snake hunters together again and take an old-fashioned rough and ready hunt." John Clark never did finish college after Baird left. With Baird's help he became a member of several exploring expeditions sent out by the government, in which Baird supervised the collection of natural history specimens. Clark often stayed at the Baird home in Washington during intervals between expeditions. Mrs. Baird often inserted letters with those sent out by her husband to Clark when he was far from home.

J. R. Cox says on Sept. 22, 1850, "I have heard very little concerning the college but should imagine it was in a measure like all material things, requiring some living force for when the magnet's gone (yourself and Professor Allen) I fear few, very few, particles will be attracted by the remaining ones. I heard Professor Agassiz deliver a course of lectures which carried me back to your lecture room in college. I recollect now perfectly the happy moments I spent reciting Zoology."

Caleb Kennerly wrote about the same time, "I feel uneasy here at home; having been used to so much company, it goes quite hard with me to coop myself up here in the country with few companions. I feel like I ought to be back in Carlisle; and nothing would please me better than to roam those old mountains for a week or two more, at least, with you and your renowned company of 'snakers.' A few days ago when at home I heard some one calling very loudly as if terrified. I ran immediately upstairs, from whence the voice seemed to come and I found mother standing in the center of the room almost speechless. Having inquired

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

about the matter, she pointed to the hearth. I looked and beheld an old *Glutinosa*, some two or three inches long, like a sentinel walking his lonely round. You can imagine her surprise and astonishment when she saw me caress him as an old friend. Frequently I dream that I am with you and we are catching salamanders and snakes in abundance."

Robert Maccoun, a friend from Carlisle, wrote, "I see that you are as fond of the wonders of nature as ever, and that you go into the very bowels of the earth to bring forth that which may gratify curiosity. It reminds me of many a pleasant hour we have spent together whether strolling along the banks of the Conodoguinet, bathing in her waters, plodding towards the mountain, watching the shooting stars, wandering by the moonlight in the college campus, or lounging upon her steps." Later when he was a doctor and served in the Navy, Maccoun wrote from a port in Africa, "I have often recalled you to my recollections and wished that you were by my side to enjoy these scenes, for I still remember those happy days when we used to wander over your native hills in search of the curious, the sparkle of your eye, as you viewed with delight some new discovered treasure, which to the uninitiated might appear only as worthless stones. Years have passed, dear fellow, and in their course I have experienced many trials and difficulties as I have wandered from my native land, climbed the highest mountains, tossed on the broad ocean and have been scorched by the equator's sun, yet I have never forgotten you, or Carlisle, and even now the retrospect of the time I spent there is solace to me, as I sit in port puffing my Havana, or musingly gazing upon the deep blue waves."

Robert A. Lamberton, valedictorian of the Class of 1843, Dickinson College, later President of Lehigh University, writes to him in 1848 that he procured a salmon for him at Dauphin,



Pennsylvania. He was only a freshman when Baird was a senior but he must have been impressed with his desire for specimens.

Perhaps Moncure Conway, a graduate of the college, Class of 1849, and a student of Baird's sums it up better than any other in his Autobiography: "Baird, the youngest of the Faculty, was the beloved professor and the ideal student. He was beautiful and also manly; all that was finest in the forms he explained to us seemed to be represented in the man. He possessed the art of getting knowledge into the dullest pupil. So fine was his spirit that his explanation of all the organs and functions of the various species were an instruction also in the refinement of mind. Nothing unclean could approach him. One main charm of spring's approach was that then would begin our weekly rambles in field, meadow, wood, where Baird introduced us to his intimates. About some of these—especially snakes—most of us had indiscriminate superstition. Occasionally he would capture some pretty and harmless snakes, and show with pencillings their differences from the poisonous ones. He even persuaded the bolder among us to handle them. He kept a small barrel of these pretty reptiles in his house and his little daughter used to play with them."

His letter of resignation, July 10, 1850, showed that he believed strongly in the college:

Gentlemen:

Having received and accepted an appointment as Assistant Secretary to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington City, it is my duty to tender my resignation of the Professorship of Natural Sciences.

I wish it to be understood that the perfect adaptation of my new position to all my wishes and feelings is the sole cause of my leaving Dickinson College, an institution to which I am strongly attached by the ties of friendship for officers and students, and by

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

obligations not readily to be repaid. On no account would I have voluntarily exchanged a position here for one in any other college in the country.

With fullest assurances of respect and esteem, I remain Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant  
Spencer F. Baird

In support of one of his statements it may be said that he actually refused the Professorship of Natural Science at the University of Vermont in 1847.

The day after that letter was received the students of Dickinson College on July 11, 1850, adopted the following resolutions:

1. Resolved. That Professor Baird has discharged the duties of his office with the most distinguished ability and in all his intercourse with the students both private and official has exhibited the most gentlemanly courtesy and kindness.

2. Resolved. That while we receive the announcement of his resignation with the deepest regret, we rejoice to hear of his promotion to a sphere better suited to the exercise of his talents and acquirements which have rendered him so justly celebrated in the scientific world.

3. Resolved. That a copy of these resolutions be sent to Professor Baird; and for insertion in papers published in Washington, New York, and Carlisle.

J. M. Caldwell  
Chairman of Committee

While Baird was in Carlisle and for some time after he assumed his duties as Assistant Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, he exchanged specimens with many scientists all over the world. There were at least a dozen institutions in America whose scientists either received specimens from him or corresponded



with him concerning natural history. Among them were the following colleges or universities: Allegheny, Amherst, Gettysburg, Harvard, Marshall, Ohio State, Ohio Wesleyan, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Western Reserve and Yale. He also carried on a great deal of correspondence with both the Boston Society of Natural History and the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. A few examples show the variety of interests. By collecting specimens during different times of the year and sending them to Asa Gray, he was able to place the box huckleberry in the right Genus, *Gaylussacia brachycera*. By sending Agassiz specimens of certain turtles in all stages of development, Baird and Agassiz were able to formulate a sound classification of these reptiles. He helped Joseph Leidy, Zoologist of the University of Pennsylvania, by sending him specimens for his then novel paper, "Entophyta, as a Normal Condition in Animals." This proved that certain plants may live normally in a sort of symbiotic relationship inside animals. In one letter Leidy asks him for certain millipeds and a large beetle which he sought six times in the neighborhood of Philadelphia without much success. Of course Baird collected them and in the reply letter Leidy says, "I received your letter yesterday and this A.M. the package containing a fine collection of *Julus*; some of them noble fellows, the largest I have ever seen. I feel much indebted to you for this as well as many past favors. I think, if no accident happens, I will be able to complete my researches on this animal with this collection. With profound respect, I remain, your friend, Joseph Leidy."

Baird's first national recognition was for his work on birds, followed soon by his becoming in turn an authority on reptiles, mammals and fishes. He did a little work on plants, publishing a paper on "Trees and Shrubs of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania." Another paper, "On the Application of the Bi-Chromate



of Potassa to Photographic Purposes," explained how he made copies of leaves of about 200 species of trees and shrubs. In it he says, "These photographs are as valuable for scientific purposes, as good engravings of the same would be, perhaps more so, as not only is the outline correctly given, but in most cases the fine and delicate nervation." Many of his botanical specimens are still on deposit in the Smithsonian Institution.

To show what breadth of knowledge Baird had in Ornithology at the age of twenty-three, let me quote from a letter he wrote to Dr. Thomas B. Wilson who had just bought the large Rivoli collection of birds:

Will you pardon the liberty which I, a stranger to you, have taken of writing to express the thanks which the whole scientific community of the country owes to you for your unexampled liberality in purchasing the splendid collection of birds now in your possession, and of placing it in a place so accessible to everyone as the Academy of Philadelphia. Had I gone to Paris, my first visit would have been to this collection. Judge then my delight when I heard that it had been brought to our own doors.

I am afraid, however, that it will be some time before your materials will be available; the mere putting in order of so many birds will require a great deal of time, and when to this you add the labor of labelling each specimen and determining the unknown species, and of intercalating those which may be procured hereafter, it will probably be found that a period of several years will be required. . . . It requires years of study, combined with great natural aptitude and ability, to be equal to such a task. I know of but one individual in the country—and I believe I am well acquainted with all the Ornithologists—who is at all capable of doing what is necessary. This is Mr. John Cassin of Philadelphia. . . . The collector of specimens is not necessarily an ornithologist; he may know the names of a great many birds, and yet be deficient



in true science, in extended views of classification, and the arrangement of analogies, affinities and relationships, unable to estimate the value of new discoveries and new ideas.

Abroad, Baird exchanged specimens with scientists from Austria, England, France, Germany, Holland, Norway and Sweden. H. E. Strickland, Oxford University, England, says on October 31, 1846, "I am glad for your letter of September 24 which gives me so gratifying an indication of the scientific activity of yourself and others in the United States." Almost a year later, he writes again, "I was much gratified to find here a box from you containing many valuable additions to my collections. They were interesting not only as increasing my number of species but also in many cases enabling me to identify with certainty many specimens."

Baird also enjoyed visiting and corresponding with such men of letters as Bryant, Emerson, Thoreau, Cooper and Holmes. In 1848 he began work as an editor, translating, editing and re-writing many parts of a number of volumes of a German "Iconographic Encyclopedia" which appeared in installments, the first four volumes in 1849, the completed volumes in 1852.

Besides being highly regarded by men of science and letters, he enjoyed a wide reputation as advisor and consultant to different members of Congress. This first became evident during the many exploring expeditions and particularly noticeable when there was the heated controversy concerning the ratification of the treaty and the bill to appropriate money for the purchase of Alaska. During the time the treaty was up for discussion, he supplied much data on the natural resources of this region and had consultations with the Secretary of State and members of both Houses. It was many years before any part of the natural resources was realized and many more until the significance of the purchase was

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

fully comprehended. Baird also had appointments with the different presidents, especially after he became Secretary of the Smithsonian, at that time the highest honor science could bestow on an American.

One of his most outstanding contributions to science in America was the founding of the National Museum, which compares very favorably with and is better in many respects than any other museum in the world. It now has 35,000,000 catalogued specimens. Baird brought its nucleus—89,000 pounds—with him when he came to Washington. During the days of explorations he saw the opportunity for quick accumulation of specimens and he took advantage of this chance by appealing to the patriotism of the men in the Exploring Expeditions to collect for a museum which he hoped would come to be the nation's finest. That his hope came true in some sense is indicated by a recent national poll showing that the National Museum is a tourist attraction in Washington second only to the Capitol and the White House.

Another significant contribution was his interest in the conservation of fish. This resulted in the origin of the Fish Commission which was really the first government agency on conservation in the United States. Its surveys resulted in better regulations of fishing and in repopulating many rivers and also part of the sea. It really saved our country many millions of dollars in food costs.

Foreign scientists were slow to believe that any good could come out of the Fish Commission work, but after awhile they were enthusiastic. A few of their remarks are worth mentioning. In 1883, Professor Huxley remarked, "If the people of Great Britain are going to deal seriously with the sea fisheries . . . unless they put into the organization of the fisheries the energy, the ingenuity, the scientific knowledge and the professional skill



which characterize my friend Professor Baird and his assistants, their efforts are not likely to come to very much good." The principal French authority, M. Raveret-Wattel, wrote, "Nowhere has government given so much enlightened care to the rational cultivation of the waters, and afforded such efficient protection and generous encouragement." The German jury at the first great International Fisheries Exhibition that was held in Berlin in 1880 reported, "We must thank America for the progress which fish culture has made during the past decade." At that exhibition the magnificent silver trophy, the first prize of honor, was awarded to Professor Baird by the Emperor.

In connection with the work of the Fish Commission at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, Baird envisioned a National Seaside Laboratory of Marine Biology. One of the first letters concerning that subject was found in the University of Rochester Library written by Baird to H. A. Ward in 1874. Baird estimated that he could fit up a building for \$3,000. At that time he had a donation of \$500 and a few other donations of a smaller amount. Since Congress was reluctant to purchase ground for a Fish Commission Laboratory, that money was probably used for that purpose. The late Dr. Conklin of Princeton University stated that Libbey (Princeton) had given \$1,000 in 1874 towards the purchase of land for the Fish Commission. Similar arrangements were made for Johns Hopkins, Harvard and Williams College at a later date. This meant that professors and students had free research space in the Fish Commission buildings. After the Fish Commission workers had finished with their surveys, those researchers were given the material for further studies. Baird's National Seaside Laboratory never materialized, but he had gotten those scientists so attached to doing research in this area that in 1888 the Marine Biological Laboratory opened its doors not far from the Fish

Commission buildings. At present it is one of the outstanding biological laboratories in the world.

Among the American honors Baird received were: Doctor of Physical Science, Dickinson College, 1856; Doctor of Medicine, Philadelphia College of Medicine, 1848; Doctor of Laws, Columbia University, 1875; Doctor of Laws, Harvard University, 1886. The following foreign awards should be mentioned: Knight of the Royal Order of St. Olaf, received from the King of Norway and Sweden, 1875; Silver medal of the Acclimatization Society of Melbourne, Australia, 1878; Gold medal of the Société d'Acclimatation de France, 1879; Erster Ehrenpreis der International Fischerei Ausstellung, gift of the Emperor of Germany, 1880 (mentioned before). He had also been made either honorary, corresponding or foreign member of many Societies.

In retrospect, we have here the story of a great man in the truest American tradition. Here was a boy who lost his father when he was ten years old but who found his interest in science before he was another ten years older. Here was a young man who roamed the countryside in search of objects of natural history with such enthusiasm that he soon had many others interested in these trips which were the incubators of the field trip technique of teaching natural history. Here was a young naturalist who collected so much that he had to develop special techniques to handle specimens efficiently, those unique arrangements being still in use in many museums. These specimens became the nucleus of the National Museum in Washington, the vitality and world-wide influence of which is in a sense due to Baird. Here was a scientist who observed so accurately that well-known contemporaries, such as Audubon and Agassiz, were immediately impressed. Poor descriptions of the same species, called by different names, were correctly classified by him and the differentiating character-



istics emphasized. Here was an American who believed something could be done to stop the decrease in the number of fish. By influencing Congress to appropriate money and materials to study the problem, he was indirectly responsible for the passage of laws to stop the depletion and actually to populate different parts of the country with more native species of fish and even with species new to the region. Perhaps this tribute written by Paul H. Oesher for a member of the "Bairdian School" is just as appropriate for him:

The sons of science walk in endless line  
 Bearing the torch; a few falter and drop  
 But the rest close in; they who have glimpsed a sign  
 Far on ahead that reads, "You must not stop!"  
 Their quests are strange and wonderful, to bring  
 The stars to earth, to take the earth to sky;  
 To know the what of every living thing  
 Of all time past, and then the how and why.  
 And here is one whose vision has been long  
 And clear and true—he saw the sign ahead.  
 His torch was radiant, and he held it strong;  
 Where it found darkness there came light instead. . . .  
 Forever seeking truth, not vain acclaims,  
 He kindled, on the way, a thousand other flames.<sup>2</sup>

Baird died at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, on August 19, 1887, on a tract of land he asked fellow citizens to purchase and in a building which he helped to design. He died near the ebb and flow of the sea with its brown algae which he once asked his friend, John Wyeth of Philadelphia, to make more palatable for his long-suffering invalid wife; near the offspring of innumerable fish he helped to hatch and tried to conserve for future genera-

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<sup>2</sup> Paul H. Oesher, *Sons of Science*, New York, 1949.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

tions; near the fishing vessels for which he had labored long with appropriation committees; near where he had labored for the Fish Commission without compensation since its inception sixteen years before; and near to the realization that his anticipated big work was completed.

When the German Fishery Union learned of Baird's death, it issued a circular in appreciation of his work, closing with this simple tribute with which I would like to close: "Im herzen seiner deutschen wie seiner americanischen Freunde wird er lange, lange fortelben. '*Ave, cara anima.*'" ("In the hearts of his German as well as his American friends he will long, long live. 'Farewell, beloved Soul!' ")



## MONCURE CONWAY: EARTHWARD PILGRIM\*



*Mary Elizabeth Burtis*

EVERY man born into this world is a pilgrim. He may live most or even all of his life without conscious awareness that he is seeking something. If he does know, he will express that which he seeks in varying terms, according to his temperament and to the generation into which he was born. He may seek for success, for truth, for some human love to complement his own personality, or he may seek that selflessness that comes through union with God.

Moncure Conway became a conscious pilgrim at the age of eight when he was aware of the need of salvation. Born into the Virginia aristocracy of parents who had embraced Protestant evangelicism as adults, he saw a difference between their prayerful, soul-searching lives and the gayer, apparently happier lives of relatives who had remained Episcopalian. He did not know what salvation meant or even what his parents thought it meant. Being a questioning child, he set himself to find out and thus took his first, purposeful step on a long and twisting journey.

This step led him only to a vague disquiet. He did not know what it was that his father and mother possessed. He did not know how to acquire it. This inability to understand led to a growing fear that was strengthened by contact with the religious,

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\* Dr. Burtis is the author of the definitive biography of Conway. The lecture was delivered on March 12, 1954.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

superstitious slaves who served the family. In his mind he identified the serpent with evil, foreshadowing his later dualistic concept of the universe: the eternal struggle of light against darkness.

Since his family attended the yearly, week-long camp-meetings, it is not surprising that the boy made at least one direct, though abortive, attempt to be converted. Moved by the crescendo of prayer and praise rising through the day and into the night, he, too, was sometimes momentarily caught up in the whirlwind of emotions. Spent and empty, he returned to the world he loved.

Moncure loved the Virginia countryside for its beauty. He found entertainment in listening to the cases tried in his father's court, in the laughter and song of his older cousins who took him on their boating parties, in the gay society of Richmond, where he occasionally stayed with relatives, and in the books he read. Everything was beautiful but everything, including himself, was, he believed, evil. Tensions mounted within him, accompanied by a growing, but as yet unrecognized, desire for freedom.

Dickinson College, which he entered as a sophomore at fifteen, gave him his first taste of another world, against which he rebelled at first because it was less beautiful to him than Virginia. He rebelled against the differences, especially the social differences, until he realized that here men were freer to speak their own minds. He finally gave full allegiance to John McClintock, Professor of Greek, because he dared to question slavery, though the boy Moncure did not yet question it. In the same way he defended a classmate who did not accept Christianity, for, though he still believed himself orthodox, he believed more firmly in freedom of thought.

Yet while he defended a fellow student's right to reject Christianity, he made one more desperate move to experience



salvation himself at a series of prayer meetings in the town church early in 1848. Earnest and intense, he forced himself into a state of emotional excitement which he accepted as true religion until, weakened and nervous from moving between doubt and what he thought belief, Moncure left college for a long rest at home.

When in September he returned as a senior, he was unaware of the disturbing forces within him. His years at Dickinson had been full of hope, in spite of personal difficulties, because he was young and resilient. Back in Virginia the young graduate toyed with the idea of journalism and studied law, which he did not like, at Warrenton. During a rest at home he experienced, under the impact of his own nature and through reading Emerson's essay on history, the first words of the Concord philosopher he had ever read, his one true conversion: a belief in the dignity of human life, which led him at that time to question the inequities of the Southern social system. Though uncertain and contradictory because his thoughts were changing, Conway was slowly moving away from what he had believed.

The first fruit of his conversion was his privately printed pamphlet on free schools. Although he was pleading for the poor whites, he was thinking of the unhappy lot of the mulatto and, though not consciously, of the Negro. He still thought he believed the Negro was subhuman. He addressed the Lyceum at Warrentown, affirming this opinion and backed by an article by Louis Aggasiz on the diversity of the origin of races. His audience was against him, not because it was concerned with the Negro but because it saw in these arguments a threat to belief in special creation. Conway wrote an essay defending his position but he did not print it, for, whatever, he might say, he knew the Negro belonged to humanity.

Those who listened to him did not understand him, and few

bothered to read his pamphlet. The people for whom he would be spokesman could not read. In answer to this problem, Conway gave up the law to become a circuit preacher. Though he went out enthusiastically, he had no specific program in mind nor did he recognize the directions in which his thought was moving. His father's slaves showered blessings upon him because they felt his sympathy. His father warned him against his too liberal views. He pondered upon the blessings and the warning while he looked forward to working in the vineyard.

His first circuit in Montgomery County, Maryland, was in a prosperous, agricultural district that offered him no opportunity to reach the poor and illiterate. Instead he read Emerson and found new truths, not yet understood, at every hand. The Quaker settlement at Sandy Spring taught him that "peace, plenty, and culture matured on the stem of labor."<sup>1</sup> His concern was not with the inwardness of their religion but with the pleasant, material lives of people who had abandoned creeds and condemned slavery. They made him face his own beliefs. They made him aware that he had to move and that he could not move without unhappiness. Throughout the year of his second circuit in Frederick County, Maryland, Conway fought with himself, often knowing doubt and despair and vowing to give himself to suffering humanity in this world. When in June, 1852, Dickinson College conferred upon him the degree of Master of Arts, he met Dr. Burnap, the Unitarian preacher from Baltimore, a man who spoke to both heart and mind. By the following autumn he could no longer preach evangelical orthodoxy with integrity.

Under the influence of Dr. Burnap, Conway decided to enter Harvard Divinity School. He was happy in Cambridge, for by

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<sup>1</sup> Conway, MS of a speech delivered at Sandy Spring Quaker Meeting House, no title, n.d.



birth and breeding the social equal of any Cambridgian, he entered their world easily and was welcome both for embracing Unitarianism and for his lively wit and good nature. He became friendly with Emerson, Theodore Parker, Charles Eliot Norton, and the Longfellows. He knew less well Lowell, Holmes, Jared Sparks, and Henry David Thoreau. He read widely, too widely to understand the meaning of all he read. He loved the opera. His interests were more and more of this world, and his religion became more and more liberal.

His years in Cambridge gave him four experiences that shaped his future life contact with Emerson and the emotional, rather than the intellectual, force of transcendentalism; his contact with Parker, who was interested in the religions of mankind; his reading of Oriental Scriptures, which confirmed his own stress on the ethical life; and his growing knowledge that, Southern-born as he was, he could not defend slavery, a knowledge that was linked to his growing humanitarianism.

Conway was soon called to the First Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C., a large and wealthy church for a beginner; but since he had relatives and friends in the capital, the move was natural. For two years he preached to this congregation, holding their loyalty in spite of outside criticisms of his too liberal, sometimes too individualistic views. The titles of his sermons during this period reveal his uncertain state of mind and occasionally hold in essence a thought that he would later develop in other sermons or books.<sup>2</sup>

Evangelicism still had sufficient hold on him that he recorded in his notebook that on October 22, 1854, he did not preach in the afternoon "for want of light."<sup>3</sup> He was beginning, however,

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<sup>2</sup> MS notebook in Conway Collection in Columbia University Library.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

to lecture on languages, on scepticism, on the way a man should live in this world, on doubt, on Jesus, who though not divine was an annointed seer. His sermon on the history of the First Unitarian Church in Washington disturbed Dr. Burnap, who felt some responsibility for the young man. But like all of those who attempted to direct Conway, he was doomed to disappointment. Conway uttered his own thought in his own way; he interpreted other people's ideas to suit his purpose; and he left one thought for another without worrying over contradictions. Quite possibly this indifference to contradiction, though inborn, was strengthened during his years in Cambridge by Emerson's characteristic remark concerning Trinitarianism and Unitarianism: "I need not nibble at one loaf forever, but eat it and go on to earn another."<sup>4</sup> It was not his individualistic interpretation of theology or his occasional flippancy that alienated him from his church. It was his continued preaching against slavery.

Moncure Conway did not deceive his people about his position on slavery. During his two years in Washington, the conviction that slavery was wrong was strengthened in him by the intolerance of his own friends on a visit to Virginia. From then on he spoke out stubbornly and boldly against an institution that allowed a human being to become the property of another human being. He did not deceive his people but he deceived himself when he assumed they could be persuaded to back him in his opinion. Young, hot-headed, and impulsive, he split in two the Washington church, experiencing all that church differences can mean in bitterness, anger, and sorrow. Then, rather dramatically accepting a self-imposed martyrdom, he retired from the field to become minister of a Unitarian church in Cincinnati.

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<sup>4</sup> *Autobiography, Memories and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway*, 2 vols., Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1904, I, 137.



Here, as in Virginia, in Cambridge, and in Washington, Conway moved among the intellectual, the wealthy, the leisured, though he himself was not wealthy and had no time for idleness. He kept his promise to help suffering humanity by writing articles without charge to bring his radical ideas before the public. He lectured to German and Jewish societies in the city and worked side by side with Archbishop Purcell of the Roman Catholic Church among the poor.

During his stay in Cincinnati he married Ellen Dana. Conway probably never fully understood his wife, her capacity for self-sacrifice, her quickness to submerge her desires in his, to live in and for him, though he knew how dear she was to him and how greatly he came to depend upon her wisdom, common sense, and vision. He was proud of his dark-haired wife; but much of his life, even when he was at home, was lived apart from her, writing his sermons and books, attending meetings, going to the theater which he loved and defended at a time when ministers did not go to the theater. He loved everything from Greek tragedy to the *Folies Bergère* or some variety show. As late as 1900 his son Eustace, on a visit to his aging and lonely father, wrote back to his sister, Mildred, that he was enjoying Paris except for the variety shows he had to attend every evening with papa.<sup>5</sup>

Ellen Conway, practical and efficient, took almost complete charge of the mechanics of the household. She missed his absences but did not resent the work that took him from her. The green-eyed monster of jealousy cast its shadow across her life until she understood that her husband liked to be in the presence of pretty women while he scarcely thought of them as human beings. At first he teased her about helping beautiful women in distress. In

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<sup>5</sup> MS Eustace Conway to Mildred Conway Sawyer, January 7, 1900. In Conway Collection in Columbia University Library.

the end she was able to write tolerantly to her grown children of papa's happiness in the presence of Ellen Terry or some other charming woman.

Conway was one of the liberal American Unitarians, open always by his words and actions to attack, even from his fellow Unitarians. Dr. Burnap felt forced to speak out against him,<sup>6</sup> and Henry W. Bellows went so far as to say that Conway had no religion, only an "honest and sublime aspiration" which did not atone for his "unevangelical and infidel ideas, and his unhallowed temper and spirit."<sup>7</sup> Both blasts were answers to Conway's resolution, at the Harvard Divinity School alumni meeting in 1859, to send an expression of sympathy to Theodore Parker in his illness. These men thought any expression of sympathy would imply sympathy with Parker's views. Conway said it need not; but all knew Conway agreed with and surpassed Parker, and were distrustful.

Conway's course had been set. With no need to preach against slavery before a congregation convinced of its evil, he turned to other social wrongs. He saw the prostitute and the drunkard as victims of environment and said so to his conservative congregation. He spoke vaguely about evolution, a concept first picked up from some words of Emerson that he would probably not have recognized. He continued to hate evil, however created, as an absolute substance, and did not know at that time of youth and happiness that Emerson's optimism was foreign to his own nature.

In a sermon of December, 1859, Conway proclaimed that Darwin's *Origin of Species* had given "the death blow to dogmatic Christianity."<sup>8</sup> In March, 1860, in a review of Darwin's book for

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<sup>6</sup> *Christian Inquirer*, August 6, 1859.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, August 13, 1859.

<sup>8</sup> Conway, *Autobiography*, I, 282.



the Cincinnati *Dial* (his own magazine, meant to be for the West what the Boston *Dial* had been for the East), he saw truth in natural science and error in religion. Thoughtful recognition of Darwin came much later in America. But Conway, neither a theologian nor a philosopher, was a young radical who seized upon a new concept of the origin of man, quixotically, poetically, without understanding that which he had grasped.

These ideas, disturbing as they were to some of his people, did not cause his final break with them. It was caused by his denial of freedom of the will and his rejection of biblical miracles, even when they were explained away as natural events. His belief at the time in determinism was as staunch as any Calvinist's belief in predestination. He had seen one church founder under his insistence upon individual belief, but that experience had not taught him patience. Under his ministry, in 1859, the wealthy Unitarian church divided—one half seceding as the Church of the Redeemer. For months there was litigation over church property and constant attack and counterattack through the pages of the *Christian Inquirer*.

All that was left of belief in Conway's half of the church was "manliness and your honest faith."<sup>9</sup> Conway would have defined honest faith as the liberation of mankind from error; and he would have insisted upon deciding what was error. At this time he became interested in Tom Paine and made his first effort to vindicate him before the American people. But the pressure and strain of the oncoming war left him unsure of himself. His position as a Southerner in the North was unhappy. Having moved so far to the left in religion and considering that the proclaiming of his antislavery views was a religious crusade, he was glad to

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<sup>9</sup> Conway, *East and West*, Cincinnati, 1859.

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

leave Cincinnati to accept the co-editorship of a new antislavery journal, *The Commonwealth*, to be published in Boston.

Shortly after the appearance of the first issue in 1862 there was dissension among the backers of the journal. The Stearns brothers, who had done the most to secure Conway's services, disliked more and more his political and religious opinions. In 1863 he sailed for England, one of the many official and unofficial ambassadors, to persuade the English that the North was right. The New England abolitionists knew how important it was to keep England from supporting the South, from which she derived much of her cotton. Surely the Virginia-born Conway's words would carry conviction! And by sending him they removed the firebrand from their midst. Conway was eager to go, for, except for the enforced separation from his family, he would escape the unbearable position of seeing the South invaded and he could plead for an independent South as well as for emancipation.

As usual, he was soon at home in some of the best houses in England. He began a friendship with Carlyle, though they did not agree on slavery, and with Browning. He wrote vigorous, sarcastic, humorous letters to *The Commonwealth*. But events moved too slowly for him. His fellow abolitionists in New England should have known his actions would be unpredictable. With no love for the Union and with his mind set on emancipation, he impulsively wrote to Mason, the Confederate envoy in London, promising "on behalf of the leading antislavery men of America" opposition to the war if the slaves were freed.<sup>10</sup> He soon realized he had no authority to make any such proposition; and the leading antislavery men of America, who had recently

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<sup>10</sup> Conway, *Autobiography*, I, 413.



jumped aboard the Union band wagon, made him uncomfortably aware of his blunder.

Sensitive, overwrought, and angry at what he felt betrayal of principles once agreed upon, Conway waited for his wife's decision before further action. At her suggestion he resigned from *The Commonwealth* and planned for her and the children to come to England. Through his liberal views and connections in London, he became minister of the South Place Chapel in 1864, a Society that had limped along for twelve years since the retirement of William Johnstone Fox.

This American with his soft Virginian accent, his ever-changing views, and his enthusiasms, built up the chapel from a run-down society, heavily in debt, to the most important liberal platform in London. In the beginning he received an almost nominal salary of £150 yearly, all the Society could afford. In "The Story of South Place," the author stated that Conway accepted the position from idealistic motives only.<sup>11</sup> There can be no doubt that he rejoiced in a pulpit where he was free to discuss every subject, ancient or modern; but there were a few practical reasons for his connection with the South Place Society. The Mason affair, according to his own words, like a "mysterious and indefinable lightning" struck at his inmost being.<sup>12</sup> Here was an opportunity to redeem his blunder, to make something of himself among people who were not concerned in any national way with what he had thought or written about the war.

He began to read from all the Scriptures of the world; he substituted meditative reading for vocal prayer, for he no longer knew to whom to pray; and he invited interesting people from

<sup>11</sup> Published by the South Place Society in *The Monthly Record*, February through December, 1952.

<sup>12</sup> Conway, *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East*, Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1909, 25.

the four corners of the earth to use his pulpit if their views were liberal. His sermon topics ranged widely. He spoke on the great men of the past and the present, on mythology and devil-lore, on Oriental religions, on dogma, on social change, on public health, on some aspect of his literary work at hand, or on some current topic.

Still interested in politics in America and England, he attempted to interpret each country to the other through the press of both. He knew many famous people; but it is unlikely that, as the author of "The Story of South Place" says, he knew more than any Englishman of his time. He liked people and was not shy about making an acquaintance or fostering a friendship. He was popular among his congregation and with many outsiders. As his income increased from his writings, his various homes in England became social centers to which anyone of any importance in the modern world gravitated. He liked to entertain and to be entertained. He liked good food and good cigars. The countless dinners, with their elaborate courses noted in his letters, could have been digested only by one living in a century less tense than ours.

Conway enjoyed society with simple enthusiasm. For this enjoyment, so frequently expressed, he has been called a "toady" and a "tuft-hunter." He was neither.

As a young man he had hesitantly approached Emerson, with whom he had already corresponded. He did not wish to trespass upon this friendship and, for the most part, did not. Only once, when Emerson visited Cincinnati in 1857, Conway made it impossible for him to refuse to give an address, which he had not expected to give, by securing him an audience beforehand. He had letters to Carlyle and Browning, both of whom welcomed him. He did not presume upon the friendships except when, after



Carlyle's death, he went uninvited to the private funeral in Scotland. He had lasting friendships with William Dean Howells and Mark Twain, giving as much in each case as he ever took.

Conway knew important people because it was his business to know them and write about them. He never surrendered a single principle to meet anyone. He lost James Anthony Froude's friendship after Carlyle's death because he placed his trust in what he believed Carlyle to have said about the publication of his *Reminiscences* above Froude's legal right to publish them. He forfeited the real friendship, though unconsciously, of Huxley, Tyndall, Sir Leslie Stephen and other scientists because they could not trust his interpretation of their words to suit his concept of evolution. Once he and Darwin heard a bird sing in a garden. Conway heard a Vedic hymn; Darwin, a hermit thrush calling its mate. Nothing could more fully express Conway's position in regard to the clergy and to the scientists.

Conway's nature during these years at South Place was both simple and complex. He could speak fluently about love, harmony, truth, and humanitarianism, uttering generalities that sounded as if they meant great things. But his thought shifted with the winds of science. On August 3, 1882, the *Index* referred to Conway and his chapel: "Around the ceiling in illuminated letters are the names of different men whom the congregation admires. Over the reading-desk is the name that has no divinity to them—the name of Jesus. On either side of this are Socrates and Shakespeare, and beyond these are Voltaire and Moses. Mr. Conway reads passages from Confucius . . . or anybody he admires. His people sing poetry from Shelley, Wordsworth, Shakespeare or Adelaide Proctor; and Mr. Conway never prays. He worships only truth."

Conway's vague and purple passages do not speak to the

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

twentieth century, which at its halfway mark has known so much of "blood, sweat, and tears." His occasional practical suggestions for the welfare of human beings have already been incorporated in the laws of England and America. While in many ways he was far in advance of his generation, social changes have come about so rapidly that his hopeful vision of society evolving toward perfection, held throughout his middle years, has been swept away by the tidal wave of war and technological advance.

Though he advocated some specific reforms and called man a reformer by nature, Conway spent most of his effort in trying to free mankind from the ideas that had most troubled him in his young manhood. If he could turn religion into love, and light, and ever-changing truth, he thought man would develop in happiness, freedom, and peace. In a sermon on Margaret Fuller he interpreted her life by his own experiences when he said, "No physical suffering can adequately express the lonely grief, the bleeding of the heart, which they have known who have passed through the world holding thoughts which none could recognize—who have lived faithful lives without true sympathy, and who have had their very love for humanity resented as hostility."<sup>13</sup> He might have been thinking of his bitter struggle against orthodoxy, of the Mason affair, or of other times when he had been involved in the battle for liberalism.

But this gentle optimism, this theory that governments would become purified before the "moral genius of woman," this belief that the universe was evolving toward perfect beauty and truth through science and art fell slowly from him before the inescapable evidence of evil in the world.

On his long westward journey to Australia and India in 1883,

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<sup>13</sup> Delivered at South Place, May 31, 1874. MS in Conway Collection in Columbia University Library.



Conway had time to think. He had been much too busy before with sermons, lectures, books, and constant entertainment. He said once that he ought to have been twins; but even twins could not have kept up the round of work that held his nose to the grindstone and have thought at the same time. He wrote almost daily for the newspapers and magazines, keeping the public informed about religion, politics, science, art, and all the fashionable gossip. He was a serious man and he was the Walter Winchell of his day.

Now he thought about Darwin, who had so recently died, and of Darwin's concept of evolution. Still concerned with the problem of suffering, he could no longer believe that Omnipotent Love selected pain as the method of evolution. If he thought about Darwin, Conway, like Spencer, with individualistic stubbornness applied Darwin's theory to all aspects of life, including art and political and social organizations. Like Spencer, he believed that man should study man and find his happiness in the happiness of others. He was not an unthinking follower of Darwin or Spencer, any more than he had been of Emerson, Parker, or any other man. Concerned with suffering and evil and never able to distinguish clearly one from the other, he who had discarded the devil after years of clearing from his mind what he believed to be ancient superstitions now began to believe what had always been on the edges of his thought: that acceptance of the principle of absolute evil, whether or not it be symbolized by the devil, was necessary to free Absolute Love from the responsibility and stain of evil. He was moving away temporarily from the despair that Darwin's work, so early hailed with joy, had ultimately caused him.

Conway was a freethinker, though he never was connected with any organization of freethinkers. He had encouraged his

## "JOHN AND MARY'S COLLEGE"

friend Francis Abbot, who left Christianity and with Octavius Brooks Frothingham, equally Conway's friend, had established the Free Religious Association. He knew Felix Adler but never became a member of the Ethical Culture Movement; and he recommended Stanton Coit, who was not popular, to be his successor at South Place. But he was never confined by any single set of beliefs. He had once believed in the Trinity; he had once believed in one God; he had once believed in an Ultimate Cause; he had once believed in Humanity. He came to believe in human beings, especially in those great men of all time who gave their lives for humanity. He was often unaware of the movement of his thought; but others recognized the direction in which he was going, for as early as the late 1870's a cartoon of "Our National Church" had included him, picturing him in a little tent marked "Conway's Free and Airy Tabernacle" and bearing a flag with the inscription "We move on." He felt he had been rightly placed on the extreme left and associated with the texts: "We have no continuing city; let us go forth without the camp," and "He dwells at large."<sup>14</sup>

Conway's position as a minister was isolated. He did not agree entirely with anyone; and disagreement did not trouble him. Truth and kindness were his gods. If no one worshiped them, so much the worse for them. But he was never without support for some part of his thinking. According to his words, few joined South Place unless their faith had been utterly lost. He gave them something to believe in, at least for a time, and they were not ungrateful. Though he had given up Christianity and was primarily concerned with ethics, he never lost the feeling of his early faith. Christianity, as he had known it, and agnosticism joined together.

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<sup>14</sup> Conway, *Autobiography*, II, 393-394.



Many of his temporary beliefs grew out of his concern with people. If he had not fulfilled his early ideal of freeing the poor and the oppressed, he did what a very busy man whose paths were among the upper classes could. His personal kindnesses were many. So were his attempts to free society from Sabbatarian laws and rigorous anti-divorce laws. He was concerned with the problems of the workingman and felt, over-optimistically and for a short time, that science and art were about to fashion a world without problems. The workingman, given more leisure, would naturally spend his spare hours in museums and art galleries until all were cultured. He gave attention also to the more practical problems of drainage and sewage disposal. He thought doctors ought to be salaried with fees doubled for a cure.

Conway had no specific social or political program to advance. He believed in representative government but detested the American bicameral system. He did not believe all men were created equal and openly recognized the superiority of the aristocracy. The only time he expressed a dissenting view was when, in the bitterness of the antislavery fight, he placed the ignorant Negro above his own class, the aristocracy of the Southern white. His ideas, expressed in books, sermons, magazines, and newspaper articles, covered such a wide variety that it was impossible to explore many of them thoroughly; and the most scholarly of his books, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, was prejudiced.

His mind lacked that masculine tone that arranges ideas into a logical relationship. He was subjective, sensitive, and, too often, heedless. Movement does not necessarily imply growth. However, there was an unusual honesty in the self-criticism of his later years. As he wrote his *Autobiography*, he wrote comments on the margins of his manuscript sermons. In 1902 he wrote about an enthusiastic appraisal of John Calvin, delivered in 1866, "Calvin,

as I now know, was a moral monster."<sup>15</sup> Of another sermon on Calvin he wrote, "Crude and mistaken in part."<sup>16</sup> Of a sermon on England and Rome he wrote, "Some foolish things I said about danger from cardinals."<sup>17</sup> Across another sermon on Rome he simply wrote, "Crude!"<sup>18</sup> And about a sermon on the American Declaration of Independence, in which he expressed belief in the right of revolution, he wrote, "Alas, how crude I was at 48!"<sup>19</sup>

Conway's major contribution to his day and ours was his continuing effort toward world peace. When he was twenty-four, he was aware of the horror of the Crimean War and, though he felt he must take England's part, he hated the fact of war with its cruelty and bloodshed. Perhaps he hated it the more because he sensed the oncoming war in America. It was not for nothing that he advocated disunion over and over again. He hoped to avoid war, especially that kind in which brother fights brother, and to achieve the emancipation of the Negro through the moral pressure of the North.

In Cincinnati before the war and again after Appomattox, Conway was able to say and to mean at both times, "War is on its last legs; and a universal peace is as sure as is the prevalence of civilization over barbarism; of liberal governments over feudal forms."<sup>20</sup> Within a few years of his repetition of this hopeful

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<sup>15</sup> MS in Conway Collection in Columbia University Library.

<sup>16</sup> MS "The Greatness and Weakness of Calvinism," delivered at South Place, March 12, 1871. Original in Conway Collection.

<sup>17</sup> MS "England and Rome," delivered at South Place, February 7, 1875. Original in Conway Collection.

<sup>18</sup> MS "Impressions of Rome," delivered at South Place, April 14, 1872. Original in Conway Collection.

<sup>19</sup> MS "The American Declaration of Independence," delivered at South Place, July, 1880. Original in Conway Collection.

<sup>20</sup> MS "On War," delivered in Cincinnati, January 10, 1858, and at South Place on February 4, 1866. Original in Conway Collection.



statement he was acting as war correspondent for the New York *World* during the Franco-Prussian War. An eyewitness of the battle of *Gravelotte*, he afterwards walked over its fields. He saw the pitiful, young dead of both sides, and the blazing sky over his head darkened. Yet he failed to read correctly the national character of the German army, of the Prussians trained for battle. He found the diary of a young German, filled with poetry of devotion to the Fatherland and interlarded with occasional, personal thoughts, including the sentence, "I tremble then in the face of death, for it is hard to become a mere part of a foreign land."<sup>21</sup> Here was the voice of Germany. Years later, an English poet who died fighting Germany in 1915 expressed the English character in the sonnet: "If I should die, think only this of me; That there's some corner of a foreign field that is forever England." The German felt that his dead body would become part of a foreign soil. The Englishman knew that living body or dust of death was unchangeably English.

In spite of his first contact with war which left him with strained nerves for months, Conway was able to preach on war with his old optimism. In a sermon, "The Lesson of the War," he said, "Over the fields of carnage bends the bow of promise. . . . From their dungeons free hearts are emerging; there is a music on the air as of breaking chains; and from the bloodstained earth which oppression has desolated, there ascends the form of a renovated Europe, opening her arms to gather the nations into one family, while her eyes shine with the light of coming ages of peace."<sup>22</sup>

This is the old optimism reinforced by contact with the International League of Peace and Liberty with its center at Basle,

<sup>21</sup> Conway, *Autobiography*, II, p. 238.

<sup>22</sup> Delivered at South Place, Sept. 4, 1870. MS in Conway Collection.

Switzerland, either on his way to or from Germany.<sup>23</sup> These radical men, largely of the working class and freethinkers, dreamed of a non-political United States of Europe. Conway did not speak of them to his congregation, possibly because, liberal as they were, they would have regarded these men and women from all over Europe as wild-eyed fanatics.<sup>24</sup> Conway had been in England long enough to know that to the average Englishman his country, if not his county, was the hub of the universe. A United States of Europe would have seemed a threat rather than a dream.

In 1872 Conway became interested in the Woman's Peace Association founded by Julia Ward Howe.<sup>25</sup> In 1876, while on a lecture tour of the United States, the desolate fields and woods of Virginia reminded him that war was brutal and, he thought, ineffectual, for the life of the southern Negro had not improved and the South was impoverished. In 1878 he delivered an address against Disraeli's policy in the East, against expansionism, control of the Suez Canal, and support of Turkey during one of her numerous wars with Russia and sent a copy to Gladstone, the temporarily dethroned Prime Minister, who acknowledged it with thanks that they could agree on one subject.<sup>26</sup> Yet, he wrote it gave him the more pain that a man as good as Conway had lost the clue that would guide him in the right direction.<sup>27</sup>

Whenever occasion arose Conway spoke out against war. In

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<sup>23</sup> Sermon on war says on way home. *Autobiography* says on way into Germany.

<sup>24</sup> Passage crossed out in MS.

<sup>25</sup> MS "London Prison Congress," July, 1872. Original in Conway Collection. According to internal evidence at least a part of the manuscript was written thirty years later. A pencilled annotation that says this chapter might be omitted suggests Conway considered it at one time for the *Autobiography*.

<sup>26</sup> Conway, *The Peril of War*, a discourse delivered at South Place Chapel, March 31, 1878, London, Waterlow and Sons.

<sup>27</sup> MS William Evart Gladstone to Conway, April 13, 1878, in Conway Collection.



1898, full of years and sorrow over the recent death of his wife, Conway addressed the Free Religious Association in Boston. He had contributed frequently to *The Index*, its organ, to put his ideas before the public. In the 1870's and 1880's there was scarcely an issue that did not mention him. His own articles and references to him reflect his growing unorthodoxy, which he freely admitted. Addressing the Association whenever he was in America, he occasionally amused his audience with some original anecdote. Once he told them of a pious Negro woman in Virginia who declared that on going to a spring for water she had heard the sound of Gabriel's trumpet. Her brethren could believe a good deal; but this was too much. When she was troubled by their doubts, an aged Negro rose in meeting to say, "After all brethren, maybe Gabriel did give the poor gal a toot or two." Conway declared this attitude quite reasonable, for, granted Gabriel and his trumpet, it was but gentlemanly of him to give this humble, believing woman "a toot or two."<sup>28</sup>

However, in 1898 Conway had no light touch for his listeners. He pleaded for arbitration and for the boycotting of all nations that declared war. He said that, though religious free thought was now assured, the want of morals led to war. Like all who lived by ethics, he was seeking some sanction other than the supernatural for morality.

He left America because he could not support the Spanish-American War. He could not support the idea of war as a solution of national or international evils; nor could he support an expansionist policy. If he felt too old and tired to fight this particular war, he slowly gathered strength to fight war in general. The principles of arbitration uttered before the Free Religious Association were printed in greater detail in the *South Place Maga-*

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<sup>28</sup> *The Index*, XVII, Old Series, October 15, 1883.

*zine* and were translated into French by the International Alliance for Arbitration.<sup>29</sup> He made three major points: no nation can be sole judge of its honor; the superiority of any nation does not prove its honor; humanity is a party to every dispute that endangers peace. He appealed to a purely spiritual force, unconnected with governments, to stop war and suggested that all disputes be referred to a body of jurists and publicists of all nations. He had tried to get Spencer's support for his plan; but Spencer saw mankind bent on destroying itself. Yet through him Conway's ideas came to the attention of Hodgson Pratt, leader of the Peace Society in London. Through his agency they were drawn up and printed in French and English in a pamphlet that was distributed to the members of the Peace Congress held in Paris in 1900. His ideal of a world kept peaceful by spiritual forces was overshadowed by the much-talked-of practical dictates of the recent Hague Convention about the laws of warfare, the treatment of prisoners of war, the rights of neutrals, and the administration of occupied territory.

In these years Conway was specifically opposed to the Boer War, which he frequently condemned. In 1900 he called war murder sanctioned by custom.<sup>30</sup> As in his antislavery work, he was by no means alone, for from the mid-nineteenth century the diplomats of Europe had turned more and more to arbitration and the peace conference. But as in his antislavery days, Conway's ideas were not fully in accord with those of other men. He felt that the Hague Convention merely legalized war. While his plan was not accepted by the Peace Congress at Paris, it was defended and contested in America, France, and England.

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<sup>29</sup> Conway, *Address au Congrès de la Paix, réunie à Paris, au mois d'Octobre, Paris, Wattier Frères, 1900.*

<sup>30</sup> Conway, "The New Beatitudes," *South Place Magazine*, January, 1900, pp. 49-55.



Through the pages of *Concord*, Conway found it necessary to deny misinterpretations printed in the same magazine.<sup>31</sup> He had not, he wrote, left the International Union because the Peace Congress at Paris had not accepted his ideas. He was willing to work with anyone for the cause of peace. He wanted, as he had wanted in the days of the Civil War, to use the force of moral coercion. His plan was endorsed, he said, by Howells, Mark Twain, Colonel Higginson, Garrison, Adolph Jacobi of Bremen, who translated it into German, and Henri Monod, who translated this and other anti-war appeals into French. Spencer, he admitted, thought the case hopeless. Through its pages *Concord* had announced frequently that progress was the most certain thing in life. For the first time Conway saw that movement was not necessarily forward and felt with Spencer that unless mankind acted in unison, it could be downward rather than upward. He spoke with a new sadness. An address before the Graduates' Club in Columbia University was printed as "La Prestige de la Guerre" in *La Revue* of September 15, 1903. If some of his details of American history were distorted and inaccurate, he wanted his country, for America remained his country wherever he might be, to stand against war. He repeated many of his ideas in the William Penn Memorial Address, delivered at Dickinson College in 1907, the last year of his life.<sup>32</sup>

Again he said that the Civil War had led only to "an increase of military ambition and lust of Empire, a consecration of the instrument by which slavery was removed—the Sword—on whose hilt, even when sheathed, our hand ever rests."<sup>33</sup> Peace

<sup>31</sup> Conway, part II, "A Plan of Arbitration," printed in *Concord*, July, 1900, pp. 98–100.

<sup>32</sup> Delivered at Dickinson College, April 25, 1907, in celebration of Penn's Frame of Government for the People of Pennsylvania.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

which seemed so desirable, so simple, was so complex. America, he felt, did not recognize her responsibility toward other countries. This man who had turned only to this earth for life's fulfillment said sadly, "Ah, I dread these Terrestrial Promised Lands! Socialist, Social Democrat, Social Cooperative, and the rest; whatever their names, and however varied the vision, they all lie beyond a Red sea—blood red."<sup>34</sup>

Conway continued to advocate the boycotting of aggressor nations, an international police, and the trial of every nation declaring war. But with increasing despair he saw the possibility of civilization fighting a war of self-defense, though he did not dream of undeclared wars, radar, and the hydrogen bomb. If he had, he might have feared such a war would lead to the very thing it fought against, the destruction of civilization. This aging pilgrim saw that the terrestrial vision fails. His search throughout life had been for truth, both literal and absolute. In expressing truth as he saw it he was expressing a part of God's truth. His honesty and yearning linked him to all those who seek something greater than themselves. There was something of the prophet and the seer both in his exaltations and laments. In this year of his despair and death he was very near swinging full circle and returning, as many have in the face of havoc, to God. As it was, there was nothing left to him but "the little chapel" of his own mind where he worshiped by himself.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.











